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A THEOLOGICAL ENQUIRY INTO THE PROCESSES OF  
PAINTING, WITH REFERENCE TO THE PHENOMENOLOGY  
OF JEAN-LUC MARION

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

York St John University

School of Humanities, Religion and Philosophy

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Dedicated to the memory of my parents

Elsie Amy 1914-2005

Frederick Albert 1915-1993

and my sister

Juliet Rosemary 1946-2011

With love and gratitude



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In view of their status as research involving other people, details of practical projects described in Chapter 7 were submitted to the York St John University Research Ethics Committee, and approval gained; references UC/23/6/10/JB, UC/14/7/10/JB and ET/12/06/12/JMB. I am grateful for constructive comments by Committee members during this process.

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## ABSTRACT

Starting points for this thesis were personal observations about how paintings may be responses to unplanned experiences, how they may take on a life of their own, and how meanings may emerge rather than be imposed. Questions arose about possible links with Christian concepts of revelation, and these were investigated with particular reference to the French Catholic philosopher and theologian Jean-Luc Marion. His concepts of saturated phenomena and their 'excess' of pure givenness were found to resonate with the actual experiences of painters but also to be critiqued by them. The core chapters discuss examples of paintings drawn from the three worlds of nature, 'culture', and persons, using an essentially threefold format: 1) presentation of selected paintings together with artists' autobiographical material; 2) phenomenological analysis; and 3) theological interpretation. Underlying this approach is Marion's approach to revelation by way of saturated phenomena, for whilst phenomenology alone cannot determine if actual revelation has taken place, it can investigate conditions for the *possibility* of revelation.

Original features include the following:

- Development of a ten-part typology of painting trajectories, reflecting diverse interactions between givenness and intentionality.
- Identification of 'nature' as a saturated phenomenon from the evidence of painting processes; this is new evidence supporting an existing critique of Marion.
- Discernment of saturated phenomena as 'nested', that is manifesting at different scales from the cosmic to the microscopic.
- Application of the 'visual-verbal chronotope' to the complexities of painterly hermeneutics, with respect to biblical images.
- Use of collaborative painting processes to enter the worlds of primary school children.
- Identification of painting processes as saturated phenomena in their own right.
- Realisation that Marion's 'givenness through saturated phenomena' approach is complementary to the 'imagination' approach to revelation pursued by several British and North American theologians. It is suggested that the two approaches need each other.

It is concluded that, phenomenologically, painters' imaginative responses to givenness are common to both secular and theistic interpretations of revelation, and that through this commonality painting processes can contribute to addressing tensions between natural and revealed theology.

**A THEOLOGICAL ENQUIRY INTO THE PROCESSES OF PAINTING,  
WITH REFERENCE TO THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF JEAN-LUC MARION**

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE THREE SPIRALS

#### 1.1 Starting points

The aims of this thesis are to explore the experiences of painting especially 'givenness', and to investigate what links, if any, may be made with Christian concepts of revelation. Approaches to the subject are drawn from both philosophy and theology, with philosophical concepts being primarily phenomenological, understood as addressing phenomena or appearances, their nature, how they appear, and their reception as gifts to consciousness (Lewis and Staehler 2010, pp. 1-2). Particular reference is made to the work of Jean-Luc Marion (1946-), a French Catholic philosopher and theologian who is internationally recognised as an important and complex thinker (Horner 2005, p. 12), and whose innovations in phenomenology have drawn in part from consideration of paintings. However, there is no attempt to address Marion's work comprehensively, rather to critically apply some of his concepts to painting processes. The *possibility* of revelation through the visual is an underlying assumption, notwithstanding the apparent biblical dominance of the verbal as the way God communicates. For it is also the case that the Bible is full of vivid visual images which have been embedded in the text and which are often essential contexts for the spoken word; these images were presumably 'real', whether directly observed or given to the mind's eye, before they became verbal. The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) points to traditional ideas of revelation stemming from prophetic discourse (Ricoeur 1980, p. 75), with prophets introducing their messages with formulae such as 'The word of the Lord came to me' (Jeremiah 2:1). Yet the prophets also describe pictures, for example the scene at the potter's house (Jeremiah 18: 3-4); or Isaiah's vision of the Lord on his throne with six-winged seraphs in attendance (Isaiah 6: 1-8), introduced with the words 'I saw'. If the words given by the Lord are held to be revelatory, then it is reasonable to think of the given pictures in the same way.



Marion (2016, p. 8) concurs with the American Jesuit theologian Avery Dulles (1918-2008) in recognising that revelation as a major theological concept emerged relatively late, as a ramification of the Enlightenment's intellectual re-orienting (Dulles 1970, p. 31). Marion refers to revelation as 'paradoxical', and to 'the aporia of the concept of revelation' (Marion 2016, pp. 4, 8); and in related vein it has been described as a 'formidable question' (Ricoeur 1980, p. 73), as a 'problem' (Dulles 1992, p. 3), and by the Welsh Anglican theologian Rowan Williams (1950-) as an 'uncomfortable question' (Williams 2000, p. 132). Fotiade and Jasper (2016, p. v) refer to 'the tension between "natural theology" and the "revealed knowledge of God" or *sacra doctrina*.' On the one hand, faith in the creator God who communicates with human beings in history underpins the Abrahamic religions; and more specifically 'the concept of revelation as a permanently valid body of truths communicated by God in biblical times, preserved and commented on by the church, is still accepted by many Christians' (Dulles 1992, p. 6). On the other hand, this concept is widely questioned today on the basis of numerous investigative approaches including psychology, biblical criticism, and comparative religion (Dulles 1992, pp. 6-8). Through this difficult terrain, Marion drives a phenomenological course founded on experiences of givenness, concepts about which will be elaborated in Chapter 2. Indeed, 'language of givenness is central to Marion's phenomenological project and maybe its most defining feature' according to Christina Gschwandtner, an American philosopher who is a prominent commentator on Marion's work (Gschwandtner 2016, p. 55).

It is in givenness that the roots of this endeavour are to be found from a personal point of view, involving reflections on my own experiences of painting - from teenage expressions of landscapes which moved me, to theological experiments of recent years at York St John University. The latter have gone hand in hand with exploring the role of the visual arts in contemporary Christian ministry, in a practical way as a Church of England priest (Ordained Local Minister) working in the rural Shropshire benefice of Ruyton-XI-Towns with Great Ness and Little Ness. Through this diverse

experience<sup>1</sup> I came to realise that the processes of painting are by no means completely under conscious control; rather that they include unforeseen experiences of receptivity and response to appearances and events both external and within the developing paintings themselves.

Artists' autobiographical material indicates that such experiences are widespread and diverse. Here are two examples of reactions to scenes encountered by painters: the Polish/British Jew Josef Herman (1911-2000), a realist who worked for eleven years in South Wales, describes his first impressions of the mining village of Ystradgynlais; and the Norwegian expressionist Edvard Munch (1863-1944) writes about the starting point of his well-known *Scream* paintings on the high ground of the Ekeberg near Oslo.

It was in 1944, either a June or July day [...] In the distance, low hills like sleeping dogs and above the hills a copper-coloured sky - how often I later returned to the colour and mood of that sky! Its light reddened the stone walls of the cottages and the outlines of the stark trees. The railings and the cement blocks of the bridge had golden contours [...] Then, unexpectedly, as though from nowhere, a group of miners stepped onto the bridge. For a split second their heads appeared against the full body of the sun, as against a yellow disc - the whole image was not unlike an icon depicting the saints with their haloes. With the light around them, the silhouettes of the miners were almost black [...] The magnificence of this scene overwhelmed me [...] *This image of the miners on the bridge against that glowing sky mystified me for years with its mixture of sadness and grandeur, and it became the source of my work for years to come.*

(Herman 2002, p. 73, Herman's italics).

---

<sup>1</sup> Whilst focusing on science at school, I took A level art in my spare time for enjoyment. Botany and geology modules during a BSc degree course at Bristol University (1962-65) provided a rigorous training in drawing from life for the purposes of observing, interpreting and recording. Subsequently I have painted when time permitted, and have exhibited occasionally. I have painted illustrations for some BA and MA assignments at York St John University, notably *Trees as Symbols in World Religions* (2004) and *Painting the Word in Ruyton-XI-Towns* (2007). Some of my paintings are on permanent display at York St John University, also in Shropshire at St John the Baptist Church, Ruyton-XI-Towns, St John the Baptist Primary School, Ruyton-XI-Towns, and All Saints Church, Baschurch.

I went along the road with two friends –  
 The sun set  
 Suddenly the sky became blood - and I felt the breath of sadness  
 I stopped - leaned against the fence - deathly tired  
 Clouds over the fjord dripped reeking blood  
 My friends went on but I just stood trembling with an open wound in my breast  
 I heard a huge extraordinary scream pass through nature.  
 (Munch,<sup>2</sup> cited by Prideaux 2005, pp. 150-151).

Together these accounts encompass feelings of being overwhelmed, witnessing magnificence and grandeur, mystification, or sadness and pain; engendered by appearances coming from nature, from the built environment, or from people. Other sources are exemplified by the quotations below, from the Russian/French pioneer of abstract art Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), the American painter Cy Twombly (1928-2011), the English abstract painter John Loker (1938-), and the Irish-born British figurative painter Francis Bacon (1909-1992). Kandinsky and Twombly between them can stand for the many painters who have responded to what they have been given from other artists' work, and for those who have been influenced by music or literature. Loker and Bacon stand for all those who experience painting as a journey of discovery, or who have seen 'the mystery of appearance' emerging from their own handling of paint.

Rembrandt moved me deeply. The great divisions of light and dark, the blending of secondary tones into the larger areas, the way in which these tones melt together in these areas (which from a distance produced the effect of a mighty chord and reminded me immediately of Wagner's trumpets) revealed to me entirely new possibilities, the superhuman power of color in its own right, and in particular, the intensification of that power achieved by combinations, i.e. contrasts. (Kandinsky 1994, p. 366).

I do not dislocate myself from cultural patterns...

I never really separated painting and literature because I've always used reference.

(Twombly 1956, 2008, cited by Cullinan 2011, pp. 17, 31).

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<sup>2</sup> This is one of at least eight alternative texts written for *The Scream* between 1895 and 1930 as far as can be ascertained (Prideaux 2005, pp. 346-347, note 41). The image exists in four versions produced between 1893 and 1910.

It's never been about object making or making of paintings as such [...] Art is about finding out.

There is always an underlying content that can be developed, like the icons on a computer; the small image is a surface sign for what is hidden beneath. Click - and they open. (Loker 1974, p. 10; Loker 2005/10).

To me, the mystery of painting today is how can appearance be made [...] how can this thing be made so that you catch the mystery of appearance within the mystery of the making? [...] one knows that by some accidental brush-marks suddenly appearance comes in with a vividness that no acceptable way of doing it would have brought about.

(Bacon 1973, cited by Sylvester 1993, p. 105).

These examples suggest artistic openness and a sense of givenness in painting processes which is missed by those theorists who, in approaching paintings from the 'outside', imply the pre-eminence of the artist's conscious will. Without delving into the huge field of philosophies of art, brief reference to the resemblance and convention theories (Eldridge 2003, pp. 31-32) will make this point. The resemblance theory keeps alive the Renaissance understanding as expressed in *On Painting* published in 1435 by Leon Battista Alberti, which is that the work of the painter is to use his or her innate and learned abilities to imitate nature as closely as possible. 'As painting aims to represent things seen, let us note how in fact things are seen' (Alberti 2004, p. 64). In Renaissance terms this involved using various rules as appropriate, notably the rules of perspective. In other words, a 'good' painting is supposed to give viewers a visual experience which is like the experience they would have of the original object. In contrast, the convention theory proposes that the object is construed in relation to the purposes of the painter, who achieves depiction through a conventionalised means of denotation, analogous to the use of language (Goodman 1976, p. 9; Eldridge 2003, p. 33). Such conventions do not stand still, as implied by Crowther when he says 'to be avant-garde involves the invention of new artistic codes and idioms' (Crowther 2012, p. 72). Notwithstanding their differences, both the resemblance and convention theories rely on painters' deliberative actions; it is assumed that the artist has a specific intention, in other words a design or plan in his or her mind (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1992, p. 335), and that this gives the artist control over the work.

As with philosophies of art, most theological writing in this area is from the 'outside', and often aspires to academic objectivity; for example paintings may be described with reference to their composition, their biblical and cultural contexts, the influence of other artists, how particular effects have been achieved and the symbolic significance of details. However the 'inside' view, with its dimension of openness to givenness, is usually missing. Williams (2005, p. 3) points to theology's current inadequacy in this area: 'it is unusual to find sustained theoretical reflection on what the process of artistic *composition* entails and what it assumes' (Williams' italics). The inadequacy identified by Williams is hardly surprising, for three reasons. First, as suggested above, theologians writing about art are not usually painters. Second, there is the inherent difficulty of using words to express what Steiner (1991, pp. 16-17) has called the indivisible 'internal vision and muscle, pre-conscious compaction and willed, technical externalization' before which 'language falters'; and what Elkins (1999, p. 74) has called the 'wonderful liquid complexity of thoughts that accompany painting [...] all in, and of, and through the paint.' Third, in reflecting on paintings from the 'outside', it is easy to miss what can be found in the words of the artists themselves, yet as Steiner (1991, p. 16) says with reference to letters written by the Post-Impressionist painters Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) and Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), they 'reveal what words can of the translation of matter into sense; it is they that take us, some way at least, into the workshop of bringing-into-being.'

This thesis is distinctive in approaching paintings from the 'inside' and focusing on processes rather than finished works. The term 'processes' includes responses to diverse givens; 'triggering' of paintings and gestation of ideas; practical preparations and techniques; and interactions between the painter and the painting as the work proceeds. Included are experiments with community and collaborative paintings in the above-mentioned rural Shropshire benefice, with interactions between contributors to consider, and the integration of multiple experiences and ideas into a coherent unity. 'Paintings' include mixed media works of art where one of the components is paint.

A primary method used in this work has been to search for and analyse what artists themselves have said about their painting, for example in letters and interviews which are available not only in academic literature but also through other media including newspapers and websites. Hence there is a large number of quotations, which I have used as basic information equivalent to data tables and graphs in a scientific paper, generally kept distinct from the main sections of analysis, interpretation and reflection. Whilst some of this material is so-called 'grey' literature published without strict academic bibliographic control, its use is justifiable here because it is a source of primary information, the words of the artists themselves. A related point is that most of what appears to be secondary referencing is in fact original material such as manuscripts, letters or interviews, albeit incorporated into secondary authors' edited compilations, magazine articles, and so on. Specific dates are not available for some of this original material, and in the case of Leonardo da Vinci's manuscripts, recognised reference numbers are therefore used instead.

The focus on primary information recognises the conclusion of Peppiatt (2012, p. viii), that the best introduction to the artists' worlds remains their own words; however, this conclusion comes with a warning, as some artists are self-promotional whilst others struggle to say anything. Notwithstanding all that he has said publicly about his own work, the popular and influential English painter David Hockney (1937-) advised 'believe only what an artist does, rather than what he says about his work' (Hockney 1976, p. 27). Similarly, an earlier warning came from Friedenthal (1963, p. 9): 'The artist is not always the best commentator on his own work or the best expounder of his own views. He may be mistaken.' In particular, when artists embark on interpretation, can their own theorising be trusted? For example, as expanded in Section 3.2, Loran (2006, pp. xxi, 77) came to the conclusion that notwithstanding Cézanne's theorising, he actually painted 'by feeling and intuition.' In view of these comments, a critical approach has been followed as far as possible by bearing the following questions in mind. To what extent are comments from different artists compatible? Is there consistency between an artist's theorising and his or her painted work? Are

relevant observations available from friends, family or others who have known the artists? Do the artists' comments resonate with my own experience? Self-examination has also been necessary because, as intimated above, another source of primary information is my own experience of painting. The first-hand reactions of viewers have been helpful in this respect.

To help keep this investigation within reasonable bounds, analysis of artistic experience is based primarily on the Western tradition, encompassing diverse movements and schools, not just overtly 'religious' paintings. The distinctive tradition of icon painting is included both for comparative purposes and because it continues to be popular in the Western world as suggested by the availability of icon painting courses.<sup>3</sup> In a few cases, experiences reported in the literature with media other than paintings, for example engravings, have contributed to the analysis. Availability of autobiographical material means that the analysis of artists' experiences generally focuses on the period from the late eighteenth century to the present day; earlier artists are not excluded, but few expressed themselves in writing before this period (Friedenthal 1963, p. 7), with the exception of some significant contributions from the Italian Renaissance.

Commentary on the phenomenological approach in general and Marion's thinking in particular is given in Chapter 2, following which he is the primary conversation partner. Of particular relevance to the present work is his trilogy: *Reduction and Givenness* (1998), *Being Given* (2002a), and *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* (2002b); also *The Crossing of the Visible* (2004), *The Visible and the Revealed* (2008), and his Gifford lectures published as *Givenness and Revelation* (2016). Concepts developed in these publications prove to be relevant in interpreting painting processes, but there is considerable scope for fruitful dialogue, for it is also the case that Marion's work can be augmented and challenged by drawing from what

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<sup>3</sup> My methodology in this respect included participating in an icon painting retreat during the summer of 2013, based at a Franciscan convent in Assisi. This experience will be referred to in Chapter 6.

painters have experienced. Debate about the extent to which Marion's theological interests influence his philosophical outcomes is apposite, having a bearing on the justification of this thesis as theological inquiry. Janicaud's critique of what he calls 'the theological turn' in French phenomenology concludes that 'phenomenology and theology make two' (Janicaud 2000, p. 99), in other words he believes that phenomenological methodology has been perverted for theological ends (Prusak 2000, p. 3). However, as elaborated in Section 8.4, Marion has made it clear that phenomenology should never be used to interpret the actuality of theistic revelation, for that is theological work (Marion 2002a, p. 367, note 90). Rather, phenomenological methods offer a rational way to the theological frontier; and in particular the above-mentioned phenomenology of givenness as developed by Marion 'is able to describe religious phenomena without sacrificing their claim to absoluteness and irreducibility' (Kosky and Carlson 2000, p. 113). Marion and Carlson (1994, p. 590) envisage a border passing between phenomenology and theology, with revelation as possibility on the phenomenological side and revelation as historicity on the theological side. Marion has often crossed this border, both from phenomenology to theology and vice versa, without confusing one side with the other. In other words, Marion's phenomenology *invites* theological comment, both by himself and others. Hence the approach used in this thesis incorporates both phenomenological analysis and theological interpretation, with these two strands being seen as complementary, both contributing to what has been called the 'Doing Theology Spiral' (Green 1990, p. 95). This approach is elaborated in the following Section 1.2, and recurs throughout the thesis.

Whilst from the philosophical point of view Marion is the main conversation partner, theological interpretation draws from several sources. This is because exploration of givenness in painting processes encompasses a diversity of subjects as exemplified in the core Chapters 3 to 7. Moreover, it is recognised that there are two main ways in which the idea of conversation partners has been used in the academic literature. In addition to individuals who have produced significant work, the term may mean an area of knowledge, interpretation or practice to which several people have



contributed; both meanings are applied theologically in this thesis. For example, the area of Orthodox understanding of icons recurs in Chapters 3, 4, and 6, the American liberal theologian Walter Wink (1935-2012) with his work on the fallen powers is a conversation partner for Chapter 5, and recent Trinitarian theology is discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

For this chapter the areas include cosmology, biology and process theology, which are all brought to bear on the development of a framework for investigating givenness. The Austrian/British scientific philosopher Karl Popper (1902-1994) is also a conversation partner here, chosen because his Three Worlds ontology (Popper 1974, p. 106; Popper and Eccles 1977, pp. 16, 84) is all-embracing with respect to the sources of 'givens' which contribute to painting processes. As the above quotations from artists imply, such givens may come from anywhere, and Popper offers a way of organising this diverse experience. His ideas together with the above-mentioned academic areas have been developed in the form of a painting which serves as a visual model, *The Three Spirals* (Baker 2010-2017; Figure 1.1), which is described below and which underlies the structure of this thesis.

## 1.2 The visual model

The three spirals in Figure 1.1 relate to Popper's Worlds 1, 2 and 3, comprising physical objects, states and processes; personal subjective experiences; and the objective products of the human mind respectively. In brief these may be expressed as nature, persons and culture, though with a distinctive view of culture as discussed further in Section 1.4. It should be noted that in the model, Popper's World 3, 'culture', is shown as the second spiral, and his world 2, 'persons', is shown as multiple third spirals within the second spiral. Production of this model involved interaction between the visual and the verbal, with experimentation with paint and response to visual effects on the one hand, and the incorporation of wide-ranging academic reading and thinking on the other. Hence it emerges from a prolonged and



Figure 1.1. *The Three Spirals*  
(Baker 2010-2017).

Acrylic, pencil and oil on  
fibreboard. 70 x 70 cm.

Key:

A = Beyond the ultimate horizon  
of our mental grasp/God.

B = The origin of the universe.

C = The expanding and evolving  
universe.

D = The culture spiral, Popper's  
World 3, containing individual  
person spirals.

E = Where we are, looking to the  
future, Pannenberg's  
exocentricity.

relatively unusual painting process, and is distinctive as a visual model in attempting to incorporate philosophical, theological and scientific aspects within the one image. From a personal point of view *The Three Spirals* may be seen as an attempt at integration, drawing upon my experiences as a professional scientist, a priest, and a painter.

In a comparative study of science and religion, the American theologian Ian Barbour (1923-2013) characterised scientific models as mental constructs attempting limited symbolic representation of what is not directly observable. They may be used to summarise complex relationships in vivid form, and may be instrumental in the continuing development of theories (Barbour 1976, pp. 33-38). The same may be said of theological models, Barbour's 'religious models'. As for *visual* models in particular, they are often used in science (Barbour 1976, p. 33), with many good examples published in *The Universe in a Nutshell* (Hawking 2001) by the British theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking (1942-2018), and *A Briefer History of Time* (Hawking and Mlodinow 2008). These have informed *The Three Spirals*, as have images of galaxies from the Hubble Space Telescope and observations of spiral forms in the biosphere. Biological spirals are numerous and include the structure of the deoxyribose nucleic acid (DNA) molecule widely published in a variety of diagrams, for example Hawking (2001, p. 161) and Goodsell (2013, pp. 19-22).

Theological models are also limited constructs, are usually verbal rather than visual, and may be used to provide perspectives on both nature and human experiences including those which impinge on painting processes. For example, awe in various contexts, awareness of complex biological structures and mechanisms, and profundity of interpersonal relationships, may all be interpreted as pointing to God; with God being modeled *inter alia* as monarch, divine clock-maker, father (Barbour 1976, pp. 56, 155-157); or mother, lover and friend (McFague 1987, pp. 78-87). With respect to the nature aspects of *The Three Spirals* it is the process model of God which has been particularly influential, because of its resonance with contemporary scientific thinking on the evolution of the universe including its continuing

creativity. Features of this model have been highlighted by Barbour (1976, pp. 161-165), drawing from the thought of the English philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), especially *Process and Reality* (Whitehead 1979). They include reciprocity between God and the universe, albeit with God alone being eternal and with unchanging purposes; God as persuader rather than coercer; and God as the ground of order and of novelty. Also applicable is McFague's model of God as mother (McFague 1987, pp. 110-111), in which 'Creation is God's self-expression, formed in God's own reality, bodied forth in the eons of evolutionary time, and supplied with the means to nurture and sustain billions of plants and creatures'; and the related models of the universe as God's body (Jantzen 1984, pp. 69 ff; McFague 1993, pp.159-195).

The approach to scientific aspects of *The Three Spirals* is 'bottom-up' in the sense used by Polkinghorne (1994, p. 11), at least partly attempting to remain grounded from an observational point of view. For example, the depiction of the universe as expanding is based upon observations of the Doppler Effect 'red shift' in light coming from distant galaxies (Hawking 2001, pp. 75-77). Hence the model can be described as rooted in natural theology, that is, theology starting from rational consideration of the created world. This is consistent with the phenomenological approach used in the following chapters, which are grounded in the lived experiences of painters rather than any prior overarching philosophies of art.

In addition to models of the DNA molecule mentioned above, and from the 'culture' and 'persons' points of view, *The Three Spirals* has been informed by diagrams of generally spiral form depicting the movement of various types of human endeavour and creativity. This is seen as propelled through an open ended cycle of experience, exploration, reflection, interpretation, response, and new experience, as Green (1990, p. 95 ) puts it in his discussion of 'Doing Theology.' Numerous related cycles have been published such as the experiential learning model of Kolb and Fry (1975, p. 33), variants of which are widely used in education and business management.

There is also Laughlin's cycle of meaning, 'the process of integrating knowledge, memory, and experience especially within a polyphasic society' (Laughlin 1997, pp. 479-481). Laughlin suggests that in contrast to the typical contemporary Western monophasic focus on the external 'objective' environment, a polyphasic worldview integrates experiences of both external and internal phases of consciousness. In his diagrammatic model, it is shamans who fulfill the integrating role, with their intentionalities which alternate between perceived objects and relations in the external environment, and 'imagined objects and relations representing internal processes of somatic activity.' The word 'intentionalities' is being used here in the phenomenological sense of directed consciousness, in contrast to the more common usage of 'intention' with its connotations of planning. As suggested by Laughlin's use, intentionality may be directed towards objects in any of the three spirals of nature, culture and persons. Like shamans, painters may be seen as fulfilling an integrating role between these different worlds, and the intentionalities of painters as they enter into painting processes form part of the phenomenological discussion of Chapter 2.

Summarising the purposes of *The Three Spirals* model, it provides a framework for setting out my basic assumptions, and for organising the diverse givens experienced by artists as discussed in later chapters. Following on from this function, the model serves as a prelude to chapter by chapter phenomenological analyses, theological interpretations, and the identification of areas where painters' experiences extend our understanding of givenness. It is also meant to be a painting in its own right, with a life of its own and the capacity to engender ideas during the painting process itself. Some are mentioned in this chapter, and others, resulting from other paintings, are included in subsequent chapters especially Chapter 2. However, discussion of the theological significance of such ideas is set on one side until Section 8.2, where they will be drawn together and considered in relation to revelation.

### 1.3 The nature spiral

The large primary spiral in *The Three Spirals* is the universe, the entire natural world envisaged both theologically and scientifically. From the evidence of vivid palaeolithic cave paintings of ice age fauna to modern landscapes in diverse styles or paintings of flowers, it is clear that the givens of nature are prolific sources of inspiration for artists. In other words, the beginning of the painting process is often a response to something seen in nature, and the development of the painting may require continuing reference to nature.

In the model, 'A' stands for the reality from which the universe emerges, phenomenologically that which lies beyond the furthest horizon our minds can grasp, and theologically God. The universe has a point of origin 'B', scientifically the 'big bang' (Hawking 2001, pp. 22-24, 168), and theologically the *creatio originalis* (Moltmann 1985, p. 208). 'C' represents the creative development of our universe as it has expanded and evolved, the *creatio continua* (Moltmann 1985, p. 209). Conceptually from the scientific viewpoint, this cosmic evolution includes the formation of the chemical elements, coalescence of dust and gases into solar systems, planets, rocks and oceans, and the emergence of life. These developments encompass non-Darwinian 'spontaneous order', 'emergent order' or 'phase transitions' (Kauffman 1995, pp. 8-26), on top of which is biological evolution through natural selection according to neo-Darwinian theory (Ridley 2004, pp. 87-89). Theologically, this dynamic view is consistent with the process model of God mentioned in Section 1.2, and an understanding of the universe as 'a complex of future-oriented events which are drawn into creative purpose by the lure of the divine Logos' (Lowe 1983, p. 217), Moltmann's *creatio anticipativa* (Moltmann 1985, p. 209). God is the God in whom 'we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28); 'being-itself' (Tillich 1951, p. 235) and 'the ground and power of being' (Tillich 1957, p. 11). These concepts about the relationship between God and the universe can be identified as panentheistic, following the generic definition of panentheism given by the Danish theologian Niels Henrik Gregerson (1956-): 'God contains the world,

yet is also more than the world. Accordingly, the world is (in some sense) "in God" (Gregersen 2004, p. 22). Panentheistic views of nature are endorsed by Orthodox Christianity (Ware 2013, pp. 90-92) and are discussed in Chapter 3; and the 'integral worldview' identified by the American liberal theologian Walter Wink (1935-2012) is also panentheistic (Wink 1998, pp. 19-20). This worldview is used in Chapter 5 in relation to fallen powers and the theological interpretation of humanity's dark side.

From a theological point of view, the painting process sharpened the question of how to paint the relationship between God and the creation. The indeterminacy of the verbal had to be collapsed into a particular visual effect, and in the end it was decided to paint an interface or ultimate horizon, beyond which our minds cannot go. The alternative would have been a merging of paint which I rejected on both phenomenological and theological grounds. However, the painting of a very clear-cut division would not have done justice to the relationship which I hoped to convey, so, realising that any efforts would be inadequate, eventually the interface was partially obscured with cloud. This relates to numerous biblical precedents in which clouds are simultaneously veiling and theophanic, for example the pillar of cloud in the wilderness (Exodus 13: 21-22), thick cloud on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19: 9, 16) and the mountaintop cloud at Jesus' transfiguration (Matthew 17:5, Mark 9:7 and Luke 9.34), all of which demonstrate the incorporation of the indispensable visual in the texts.

The painting process was also thought-provoking concerning God as the 'ground of being.' Experimentation suggested that from the aesthetic point of view, the area 'A' was better represented by both light and dark areas than by a uniformly light area as originally envisaged. Is the combination of light and dark saying something of theological interest? Much liturgical and hymnic material, and texts such as 1 John 1:5, 'God is light and in him there is no darkness at all'<sup>4</sup>, discourage the idea of relating God to darkness, yet

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<sup>4</sup> All biblical quotations in this thesis are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NRSV 1995).

this is not the only biblical viewpoint. For example, God is in, or surrounded by, ‘thick darkness’ (Exodus 20:21, 1 Kings 8:12, 2 Chronicles 6:1, Psalm 97:2), and in Isaiah 45 the Lord says ‘I will give you the treasures of darkness’ (verse 3) and ‘I form light and create darkness’ (verse 7).

Darkness may have connotations of mystery, and of good things growing in secret. Further experimentation with the light area suggested that it was better painted gold than white because the unfolding universe became so colourful that gold gave a better balance. In some areas the gold is obscured by the cloud and gives a different quality to the cloud than would a white background; in the central area the gold is unobscured. At this point I realised retrospectively that the painting was approaching one of the characteristics of icons, for gold in Orthodox iconography represents God’s immanent glory and transfiguring presence (Hart 2011, p. 171), the uncreated light (Nes 2007, pp. 102-105). The gold is not a presumptuous attempt to depict God directly, but by analogy may be compared with the rays of the sun:

For one applies the word “sun” to the rays as well as the source of the rays; yet it does not follow that there are two suns. There is, then, a single God, even though one says that the deifying grace is *from* God. (Gregory Palamas 1983, p. 108. First published 14<sup>th</sup> century).

Further, whilst researching the significance of icon landscape features for Section 3.5, I discovered that trees may be highlighted with gold; according to the Orthodox iconographer Aidan Hart (1957-) this is meant to unveil the *logoi*, the words from the Word or *Logos*, which are hidden within all created things (Hart 2014, pp. 83-84). Following this train of thought, I incorporated some gold highlighting in the painted spirals.

In brief, two other unplanned thought-provoking occurrences emerged as a result of the painting process. First, the universe appears to be unfolding on a *surface*, bringing to mind scientific theorising about the universe being ten or eleven-dimensional with our human-scale spacetime appearing ‘nearly flat’, in other words ‘a four-dimensional surface or brane in a higher-dimensional spacetime’ (Hawking 2001, pp. 179-180). Second, a ‘tunnel’



effect emerged, which brought to mind a birth canal reminiscent of McFague's 'mother' and 'body' models mentioned in Section 1.2.

Continuing the discussion of spirals begun in Section 1.2, the depiction of nature in this way has also been influenced by Wheeler's suggestion that 'Physics gives rise to observer-participancy; observer-participancy gives rise to information; and information gives rise to physics' (Wheeler 1990, p. 8). The English physicist and natural philosopher Paul Davies (1946-) promoted Wheeler's symbolic representation of the universe as a 'U' with an eye at the end of one of the verticals looking across at the origin, the end of the other vertical. In other words, in this interpretation of quantum mechanics it is only through human acts of observation or measurement that physical reality becomes actualised (Davies 1993, pp. 224-225). However, there are other interpretations notably the 'many-worlds' theory which rejects the idea that the act of measuring changes reality but instead proposes that the universe is 'a coherent superposition of all of the possible things that can happen' (Cox and Forshaw 2012, p. 188). With this lack of scientific agreement, the following theological viewpoint became relatively important in the choice of a spiral to represent nature.

Theologically, the French Jesuit anthropologist Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) referred to the 'breakthrough' in human evolution through which 'the wave of complexity-consciousness on earth has penetrated [...] into a domain or compartment that is completely new to the universe: the domain of reflection' (de Chardin 1971, p. 79). This means that having through 'upwards' movement reached this level, we can now turn and look 'downwards' at the pattern of the universe as a whole (de Chardin 1970, p. 244). This relates to the panentheistic concept that 'the world not only derives its existence from God but also returns to God, while preserving the characteristics of being a creature. Accordingly, the relations between God and world are (in some sense) bilateral' (Gregersen 2004, p. 22). The depiction of the universe in 'C' includes dark areas and suggestions of explosions, introduced in recognition of the limitations of scientific knowledge and the violence of some natural events such as supernova explosions,

earthquakes and extinctions in the pathways of biological evolution. Relating knowledge to the phenomenological concept of horizons which will be discussed in Section 2.4, we can identify ‘known knowns’, for example we know that moon rocks and earth rocks are mineralogically similar, and ‘known unknowns’, for example, we do not yet know if intelligent self-aware beings live on other planets in the far reaches of our galaxy or in distant galaxies. If they do, this would extend the arising of de Chardin’s ‘new domain of reflection’, which may indeed have happened in a different part of the universe long before human beings existed on earth. There are also ‘unknown unknowns’, some of which may eventually come to light, surprising researchers and propagating families of ‘known unknowns which can then be tackled by traditional hypothesis forming and testing’ (Logan 2009, p. 714). This often-used tripartite distinction seems first to have been made by the influential Canadian theologian Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984) in his Boston College lectures of 1957 (Lonergan 2001, p.198).

Beyond this is the question of inherent unknowability, as intimated by the already-mentioned interface or ultimate horizon in *The Three Spirals* model. But are there really intrinsic limits to knowledge and understanding? (Hut *et al* 2000). Hawking put it:

Some people will be very disappointed if there is not an ultimate theory that can be formulated as a finite number of principles. I used to belong to that camp, but I have changed my mind. I’m now glad that our search for understanding will never come to an end. (Hawking 2002).

Hawking’s change of mind owes much to analogy with Godel’s incompleteness theorem which demonstrated that ‘any finite system of axioms is not sufficient to prove every result in mathematics’ (Hawking 2002). Further, the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) distinguished between phenomena perceived by the human senses (which necessarily include all the empirical observations underlying both scientific theorising and painting); and presumed noumena, things-in-themselves, a ‘boundary concept [...] to limit the pretension of sensibility’ yet unable ‘to posit anything positive outside of the domain of the latter’ (Kant 1999, p.

350). Here is another pointer to an ultimate phenomenological horizon as discussed in Section 2.4, which may be approached by both painters and theologians and from beyond which, however interpreted, pure givenness comes to us.

It should be emphasised that such a perspective is inevitably from where we are - represented in *The Three Spirals* by the area E with its interacting person spirals embedded within the culture and nature spirals. This recognises our biological constraints as exemplified below, and our position in history including current scientific, philosophical, and theological thinking. In trying to look further we encounter limits or horizons as mentioned above together with their implied 'beyonds'; the beyond may also be encountered in the philosophical concept of the sublime as introduced in Section 3.4. From the practical point of view, painting the furthest reaches of the knowable universe as a cloudy interface which impinges upon both darkness and light is also a reflection of our limited human perspective, expressed through biblical symbolism. With the second commandment in mind (Exodus 20:4) there was no attempt to paint God directly; with reference to Marion this is an application of his view that the very idea that God can be described falls into the trap of conceptual idolatry:

When a philosophical thought expresses a concept of what it then names "God," this concept functions exactly as an idol. It gives itself to be seen, but thus all the better conceals itself as the mirror where thought, invisibly, has its forward point fixed... (Marion 2012, p. 16).

Whilst terms such as limits, horizons, 'beyonds', boundaries, interfaces and the sublime are applicable to us in our attempts to look outwards, they are not meant to apply from the other direction, to God and his actions. The challenge of expressing the understanding that 'there is nothing in relation to which God is 'outside' or 'beyond'' (Quash 2013a) has traditionally been approached in a variety of ways which are discussed further in Section 3.5. These include the Catholic sacramental vision with its emphasis on God's presence in the world, and the Orthodox iconographic tradition already briefly mentioned above, with its use of gold to represent God's immanence

in creation. To these may be added the concept of 'de-sublimation' through nested saturated phenomena. This original development from Marion's work on saturated phenomena as introduced in Section 2.5 is elaborated in Sections 3.4, 4.5 and 5.5, with reference to nature, the Bible and the First World War respectively. The war, during which the sublime manifested as overwhelming horror, expressed as 'godless' by the English artist Paul Nash (1889-1948), is particularly challenging. Yet God may be encountered even here, and artists among others have, through desublimation, uncovered and represented details of care and love which point to his presence.

The word phenomena as used by Kant laid the foundation for the subsequent development of phenomenology; and includes our experiences of the heavens, mountains, rivers, trees, animals, other people or any other aspect of creation which may incite artists to paint. Such experiences are limited by biological constraints, in other words mediated by the nature of the creation itself, for the human body with its sensing organs, genetics and neurochemistry has, in terms of *The Three Spirals*, emerged within 'C', the creative development of the universe. Our experiences cannot be separated from our biological make-up, and examples of particular relevance for consideration of painting processes are human colour vision, the recognition of scenes in line drawings, and our responses to landscapes.

With other primates we share keen colour discrimination, which has long been interpreted as adaptational for discerning fruits embedded in foliage, or identifying edible foliage (Jacobs 2009, pp. 2963-2964). A further interpretation, which need not exclude the above, is that primate colour vision was selected for discriminating changes in skin colour of conspecifics, relating to emotional and socio-sexual signals (Changizi *et al* 2006, p. 217). Concerning line drawings, why do they work? In reality, objects rarely have lines around them, yet we easily recognise objects and scenes represented by a few lines in simple drawings. Sayim and Cavanagh (2011, pp. 1-5) demonstrate that this is not a learned convention, but suggest that lines 'trigger a neural response that has evolved to deal with natural scenes', with the lines standing in for solid edges. They suggest that in making use of this

response, artists are intuitively going ‘well beyond the understanding of vision found in current neurosciences and computer vision.’ In other words, these two examples suggest that artists’ responses to phenomena are partially innate, an idea which was developed with respect to landscapes by the work of the British geographer Jay Appleton (1919-2015).

Appleton replaced the traditional aestheticians’ question ‘what is beauty?’ with the more limited ‘what is the source of that pleasure which we derive from the contemplation of landscape?’ (Appleton 1996, p. 14). Adopting a Darwinian approach, he reminds us that we are only two hundred generations removed from the Stone Age, when ‘a keen sensitivity to environment was a prerequisite of physical survival’ (Appleton 1996, p. 60). He drew upon animal behaviour studies which suggest that habitat selection depends upon landscape features ‘which, in their shapes, colours, spatial arrangements and other visible attributes, act as sign-stimuli indicative of environmental conditions favourable to survival’ (Appleton 1996, p. 62). Proceeding to a consideration of human hunting behaviour, where the hunters need to see without being seen, he concluded that ‘a combination of searching and hiding, whether these are rational or spontaneous activities, is fundamental to success’ (Appleton 1996, p. 65). Grounded in this behavioural science, he proposed a framework for the symbolic interpretation of landscape, with the three reference areas of prospect (or opportunity), hazard and refuge (Appleton 1996, pp. 73-107), towards which our attraction and responses are at least partly genetically pre-disposed.

His arguments are illustrated by analysis of paintings reflecting one or other of his three areas, for example the Dutch landscape painter Meindert Hobbema (1638-1709), in *The Avenue at Middelharnis* (Hobbema 1689), has what Appleton calls ‘reduplicated’ prospect symbols, the avenue itself leading strongly into the distance, but also on either side ‘inviting expanses’ with buildings in the distance (Appleton 1996, pp. 108-109). There is a striking though unplanned resonance between Appleton’s framework and the structuring of an exhibition of Paul Nash’s paintings by Jenkins (2010, pp. 46-163) into: elements in conflict; a path through the elements; elements as

refuge; elements in harmony. Examples of Nash landscapes allocated to the 'elements as conflict' (hazard) include two mentioned in Chapter 5, *The Combat* (Nash 1910) and the ironically named scene of war devastation *We are Making a New World* (Nash 1918e). The 'elements as refuge' category included the group of trees named *Wittenham Clumps* (Nash 1913) and *The Nest of the Wild Stones* (Nash 1937).

It may be concluded that what is seen of the external world is 'reality' transformed by what Ashbrook and Albright (1997, p. 18) call 'sensory windows', comprising sense organs together with brain functioning, genetically influenced and differing between different species. There are developmental considerations as well, for the brain has to learn to see, this takes time and the early years of one's life are particularly important. A celebrated case history is the early cataract operation carried out by the London surgeon William Cheselden (1688-1752), which restored sight to a thirteen year old boy who had been blind since childhood. Cheselden carried out some informal tests which included showing the boy pictures; these were particularly problematic and for two months the boy saw them not as representations of objects but as what they are objectively: 'Party-coloured Planes, or surfaces diversified with Variety of Paint' (Gayford 2011, p. 10; Wade and Swanston 2013, pp. 56-57). Similarly but much more recently, the Indian-born American-based neuroscientist Pawan Sinha established Project Prakesh in 2005 to help restore the sight of cataract-blinded children in India; he reports that newly sighted children find it difficult to integrate images as they see areas of different colour or brightness as separate entities (Sinha 2015, p. 28). More generally, everyone has to learn how to interpret what they see, as exemplified by an intriguing incident recorded by the English painter Stanley Spencer (1891-1959). During the First World War he was sent to a transit camp at Devonport whilst *en route* for overseas duty, and unfamiliar with the sea, he wrote about his first impressions of the coast: 'I did not realize I was looking out across the sea till I saw a ship up in the clouds & came to the sensible conclusion that the sea was under it' (Spencer 1916, cited by Gough 2011, pp. 34, 74).

Internal experiences are also implicated, as is clearly accepted by Laughlin (1997, pp. 473-474) in his development of the cycle of meaning. As mentioned in Section 1.2, he interprets internal experiences such as 'imagined objects and relations' as 'representing internal processes of somatic activity', which need to be integrated with experience of the external environment. Somatic activity, that is biological activity including genetically based brain neurochemical processes, is associated with the full range of internal experiences such as dreaming, feelings and imagination. Some scientists and philosophers, confidently adopting a reductionist approach, suggest that these experiences are 'just' functions of our brain tissue (see, for example, Churchland 2013, pp. 30-31); though Damasio (2005, pp. 258-259) sounds a cautionary note in pointing to the sheer structural complexity which underlies continuing uncertainties about how the brain makes the mind.

However, whilst accepting that our experiences do indeed arise in the biological functioning of our brains, it is possible to look at this in another way. Ashbrook and Albright (1997, pp. xxviii, 162) refer to the materiality of the brain as an 'empirical anchor of intentionality' and argue for a combined 'bottom-up and top-down' interpretation of human actions. Such an understanding is assumed in this thesis. In artistic terms it means that among other things paintings may be triggered and developed through a range of unconscious biological determinants, but at the same time are influenced by the reaching out of our conscious minds, our intentionality.

#### **1.4 The culture spiral**

As well as our experiences being mediated by the nature of the creation itself as discussed above, they are also mediated by what Popper calls World 3 represented as the structure 'D', that is the second spiral in *The Three Spirals*. This comprises the public components of human culture, objective products of the human mind capable of being transmitted from generation to generation through teaching and learning. Popper argues that

these are more than the 'expressions of subjective mental states' (Popper 1974, p. 107); in effect they take on a life of their own and influence events independently of their originators. The designation 'World 3' usefully emphasises the distinction between individual and social aspects of culture; the former could not survive human extinction whereas information about the latter could in principle be preserved in diverse artifacts. In the thought experiment of Ayala, these could in turn be interpreted by humanoids from another planet (Ayala 2007, pp. 249-250). In a more down-to-earth painterly example, the highly influential Spanish painter Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) stated that unfamiliar forms appearing in his ground-breaking painting *Les Femmes d'Alger* (Picasso 1907) were influenced by his intense interest in recently excavated pre-Roman Iberian sculptures (Sweeney 1941, p. 191), in other words artifacts from a past and largely forgotten culture.

Popper's World 3 is related to a number of other ideas. Deacon (1997, pp. 340-341) suggests a new 'virtual' species designation, *Homo symbolicus*, the emergence of which corresponds to the first hominids using symbolic communication. Members of this species are defined by the 'dual inheritance' of genetic and symbolic information transmission. Dual inheritance is also a feature of the biocultural evolution model:

Biocultural evolution consists of a series of interactions among: the biological information resident within individuals and populations in the form of the genetic constitution (i.e., the DNA); the cultural information which is the sum of the knowledge and experience which a particular society has accumulated and is available for exchange among its members; and thirdly, a human central nervous system, which is of course a biologically based system, whose principal evolved function with respect to this model is to facilitate the communication or storage of individually and socially developed knowledge and awareness. (Bowker 1983, p. 356).

Popper's list of World 3 examples includes 'stories, explanatory myths, tools, scientific theories (whether true or false), scientific problems, social institutions, and works of art' (Popper and Eccles 1977, pp. 38-39). To this may be added the Bible with its various literary genres including the aforementioned stories and explanatory myths, theological models, philosophical concepts, and the internet. Popper's example 'works of art' may be



expanded to include the diversity of painting styles or genres. Adding to the above example from Picasso's work, numerous paintings may be seen as incited or influenced by World 3 products including biblical texts (as exemplified in Chapter 4) and the works of earlier artists. In the case of *The Three Spirals* painting, influences as already mentioned in Section 1.2 include contemporary cosmological theory, panentheist and process theology, and pre-existing spiral diagrams.

World 3 adds a second layer of mediation or filtering to the World 1 layer of 'sensory windows' mentioned in Section 1.3. Continuing the example of attraction to a landscape being a biologically based starting point for some painting processes, the World 3 layer of mediation could include such influences on the artist as geological theories or concepts of beauty prevalent at the time of the painting. World 3 objects, whether material or abstract, may interact with and change Worlds 1 and 2, and in some cases other World 3 objects. For example, tools, which may derive from more abstract objects such as scientific theories, encompass a great range of products including computers, axes, tractors, and offshore oil production platforms, all of which may interact with World 1. As for World 3 objects interacting with the subjective selves of World 2, there are the above examples of influences on painters, to which may be added the subjective effects of wielding brushes and paints.

Notwithstanding the separate identity and effects of World 3, the second spiral is, as far as possible, painted *in nature*, to symbolise the ultimate dependence of culture on environment. An early painterly example of this connection is provided by prehistoric artists, members of hunter/gatherer communities living in caves or houses made of wood and turf, and painting magnificent mammoths, horses, cave bears and other fauna on cave walls. Of necessity they used natural pigments such as charcoal, lime white, and various iron oxides including yellow and red ochres. Red ochre made from haematite mined in West Cumbria, 'Egremont Red', is one of the paints used in *The Three Spirals*, remembering and celebrating our artistic predecessors of the Palaeolithic. Yet even in today's cityscapes, dependence on nature is

still fundamental, exemplified by the constant flux of the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, and the continuing use by painters of earth pigments.

It was decided for both aesthetic and philosophical reasons to paint the culture spiral with various colours, representing the diversity of human achievements. Like the nature spiral but for different reasons, areas of darkness and suggestions of explosions are included, because though not discussed by Popper, World 3 must also be the context in which some aspects of human evil arise. This is the arena discussed by the pioneering theologian of public life Reinhold Niebuhr as 'immoral society.' His underlying thesis was that group morality is inferior to individual morality for a variety of reasons including 'the power of self-interest and collective egoism in all inter-group relations' (Niebuhr 1989, p. 47). The failings of social institutions have been starting points for some painters; for example various aspects of war as exemplified in Chapter 5. Also painted within the second spiral are the suggestions of many strands, like a rope, standing for an enormous number of culturally transmitted phenomena including diverse farming practices, religious rituals, scientific methodologies, and painting styles. Three such strands, the transmission histories of three biblical texts, are examined in detail in Chapter 4.

Theologically, the continuing extension of the spiral 'E' symbolises exocentricity, namely the suggestion by Pannenberg (1994, p. 229) that humans are inherently 'exocentric.' That is, we have an awareness of horizons transcending our finitude, a view consistent with the process theology model. The spiral is continuing into that part of the unfolding universe which is violet-shifted to symbolise the future coming towards us, in contrast to the red-shifted earlier universe moving away from us. Of course the violet shift depiction is conceptual rather than empirical, but the red shift is based on Hubble Space Telescope images of receding galaxies.

### 1.5 The person spiral

The third level of spiral represents individual persons, each with his or her cycles of incrementing experience, feelings, knowledge and thought in the subjective sense, called World 2 by Popper (1974, p. 74). Numerous such spirals representing groups of people are shown within the wider cultural milieu of World 3 'D', without which they would be relatively helpless, lacking language and related mental tools. Incrementation may grind to a halt both individually and socially if the spirals turn into vicious circles, which they may do if minds become unreceptive and closed to new experience, uninterested in exploration and reflection, and too lethargic for response.

As each spiral represents a human identity, there is no actual merging because minds do not have unmediated access to each other (notwithstanding the interesting fictional representations of Vulcan 'mind-melding' in *Star Trek*). Instead, though the spirals may abut on each other and influence each other through biological and cultural communication channels, there is always a boundary between them. However well one knows another person, human beings remain mysteries to each other. This can stand as an analogy for the related standpoint in this model, that people do not have what Dulles (1992, p. 76) called 'direct, unmediated encounter with the divine' in the mystical sense; rather there are the two intervening layers of biological and cultural mediation. The Anglican mystic Evelyn Underhill defined mysticism as 'the art of union with reality' and compared this with the relationship between artists and the subjects of their art to which they have surrendered and with which they have 'united' (Underhill 1986, p. 24). However, this analogy does not fit well with the frequent experience of painters coming to see their work as apart from themselves and having a sometimes surprising life of its own.

Each person spiral is envisaged as multicoloured and with dark areas like the other two spirals, representing both the full range of human potential and the human capacity for evil. They are also biocultural as mentioned in Section 1.4, simultaneously inhabiting the worlds of nature and culture,

whilst adding a further dimension, the subjective world of thinking and feeling as exemplified in these words of Picasso:

One must always begin with something [...] It is the object which aroused the artist, stimulated his ideas and set off his emotions. These ideas and emotions will be imprisoned in his work for good [...] man is the instrument of nature; she imposes on him her character and appearance.

(Picasso 1934, cited by Friedenthal 1963, pp. 256-257).

Here there is recognition of the necessity of a given - that which arouses the artist, in this case an object from World 1, followed by combined working of thinking and feeling. Whilst this combination applies to most painters, some show predispositions and preferences for emphasising one or the other; this is evidence which suggests that painters, like the population in general, have different psychological types. The psychology of personality is a large and complex research area, but without attempting to review this comprehensively, it may be noted that what artists actually say about painting may often be related to the types first discerned by the Swiss pioneer of analytical psychology, Carl Gustav Jung (1975-1961) and which are still widely recognised today. In particular, he defined the four functions of sensing, thinking, feeling, and intuiting as follows:

Under sensation I include all perceptions by means of the sense organs; by thinking I mean the function of intellectual cognition and the forming of logical conclusions; feeling is a function of subjective valuation; intuition<sup>5</sup> I take as perception by way of the unconscious, or perception of unconscious contents.

So far as my experience goes, these four basic functions seem to me sufficient to express and represent the various modes of conscious orientation. For complete orientation all four functions should contribute equally: thinking should facilitate cognition and judgment, feeling should tell us how and to what extent a thing is important or unimportant for us, sensation should convey concrete reality to us through seeing, hearing, tasting etc., and intuition<sup>5</sup> should enable us to divine the hidden possibilities in the background, since these too belong to the complete picture of a given situation. In reality, however, these basic functions are seldom or never uniformly differentiated and equally at our disposal.

(Jung 2017, pp. 472-473. First published 1925).

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that Jung's use of the word 'intuition' is different from the phenomenological usage, which will be defined in Section 2.4.

This fourfold model is not to be understood as prescriptive of painters' approaches, or as suggesting mutually exclusive tendencies, rather as a pointer to what might influence World 2 contributions to the conception and development of paintings. By way of illustration, in the following group of quotations the first three suggest a pre-disposition to thinking and the fourth to feeling. The fifth includes sensing, because what is expressed as 'feeling' the rock can be understood as sensing it in Jungian terms. The detailed analysis of Cézanne in Chapter 3 suggests that he also had a pre-disposition for sensing.

The starting-point of a picture is an idea - if the object is there while one is working, there is always a danger that the artist may be captivated by the implications of the direct, immediate view, and lose the original idea as he goes on. (Pierre Bonnard 1867-1947, French Post-Impressionist, 1943, cited by Friedenthal 1963, p. 244).

Find the forms you desire to express your purpose. When you have succeeded in getting them as near as you can to express your idea, never leave them but push further on and on strengthening and emphasizing those forms to enclose that green idea or ideal. (Emily Carr 1871-1945, Canadian landscape painter and associate of the Group of 7. Carr 1966, p. 29).

The artist, having discerned a form which presents a certain intensity of analogy with his pre-existing idea, prefers it to other forms... (Albert Gleizes 1881-1953 and Jean Metzinger 1883-1956, French cubist painters and theorists. Gleizes and Metzinger 1964, p. 6).

Be guided solely by feeling [...] While seeking conscious imitation, I do not for an instant lose the emotion that first gripped me. Reality forms part of art; feeling completes it. (Camille Corot, 1796-1875, French landscape painter, cited by Friedenthal (1963, p. 82).

When I'm painting particular bits of form, bits of rock, I'm also imagining climbing it. I can feel the rock and I think this gives me a deeper mental contact with what it is I'm trying to describe with the paint. Working close to the surface I don't really know how it's going to read from a distance, but there's part of my eye or brain that's ten feet further back. I don't quite know how it works, but I think it links in with the climbing bit. (Julian Cooper 1947-, Lake District-based painter of mountains and 'sporadic rock climber.' Cooper 2004b, p. 11).

These quotations also suggest a connection between the Jungian functions and what the American psychologist Russell Hurlburt (1945-) calls 'pristine inner experience' (Hurlburt 2011, p. 2), presented directly to consciousness, ever-changing, inhering 'in the procession of moments' (Hurlburt (2011, p. 14) and not necessarily recognised even by the subjects themselves

(Hurlburt and Akhter 2011, p. 291). In the 1980's, Hurlburt pioneered Descriptive Experience Sampling (DES), in which volunteers in their everyday life wear beepers. Random beeps are a cue to immediately 'pay attention to the inner experience that was ongoing at [...] the last undisturbed moment before the beep' (Hurlburt 2011, p. 50). Like any methodology, this one has its critics, some pointing to the unreliability of introspective methods in general (e.g. Schlinger 2017). More fundamental is the concern that the very act of paying attention 'constructs the "pristine" mental phenomena it purports to discover' (Krueger *et al* 2014 pp. 9-10). This concern is reminiscent of the observer effect, an already-mentioned interpretation of quantum mechanics in which it is through human observation or measurement that physical reality becomes actualised (Davies 1993, pp. 224-225). However, whilst recognising the inevitable limitations of DES, a look at Hurlburt's actual findings suggests that they do offer a perspective on the inner experiences which contribute so essentially to painting processes. Summarising these findings, the five main areas of experience identified, albeit often mixed together and with considerable variation between individuals, are sensory awareness, feelings (as in emotional situations), inner speech, unsymbolised thinking, and inner seeing (Hurlburt and Akhter 2011, p. 292). In this context it is inner seeing which is of particular interest, and a provisional conclusion, recognising the need for more scientific study in this area, is that:

...the ability to innerly see (to form an image, as it is usually stated) is a skill that is acquired gradually across childhood, a skill that is acquired with substantial proficiency by some and very little or no proficiency by others (Hurlburt 2011, p. 136).

Inner seeing is clearly implied in two of the artists' quotations given above. When Emily Carr advises finding the forms which express the artist's idea as closely as possible, the 'idea' must include an element of inner seeing of forms, otherwise the artist will not recognise in reality what is already provisionally 'seen' in the mind's eye. Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger express a similar approach. Trying to catch myself unawares in the spirit of Hurlburt's research, I find that I often experience inner seeing involving

specific subjects, forms, colours, and possible compositions, projected in the air or against a wall, sometimes mixed up with inner speech concerning ideas. I realise that in some cases this is connected with the start of a painting, for example *The Presence of the Lord* (Baker 2007a) as described in Section 2.2. From these limited findings I suggest the hypothesis that painters have relatively well developed abilities for inner seeing and that these contribute to painting processes; Hurlburt's methodology could play a part in testing this. However, I find that inner seeing is not enough, it is necessary to also receive givens from external phenomena, and in this respect my experience is like that of Carr, or Gleizes and Metzinger.

Inner seeing can be related to the concept of *disegno* which developed during the Italian Renaissance. The meaning of the word includes practical ability in drawing as a means of expression but also, at a more fundamental level, what the artist and writer Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) called 'conceptions of the mind' (Vasari 1907, p. 207). The Italian artist and writer Federico Zuccaro (c. 1540-1609) took the idea further in a theological direction in his 1607 publication *The Idea of Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, distinguishing between *disegno esterno* and *disegno interno*. The former includes 'all visible expressions of mental images', not just human artworks but also the forms of nature which Zuccaro understood to be 'the visible guise of the divine *disegno interno*', originating from God's archetypal ideas (Strunck 2007, p. 115). The human *disegno interno* is the 'spark of the fire of the Divine intellect', which precedes any practical artistic activity (Hendrix 2007 pp. 1, 6). Zuccaro proposed that God wished to grant to man:

the ability to form in himself an inner intellectual Design; so that by means of it he could know all the creatures and could form in himself a new world, and internally could have and enjoy in a spiritual state that which externally he enjoys and commands in a natural state; and, moreover, so that with this Design, almost imitating God and vying with Nature, he could produce an infinite number of artificial things resembling natural ones, and by means of painting and sculpture make new Paradises visible on Earth. (Zuccaro 1607, cited by Panofsky 1968, p. 88).

Zuccaro seems to be pointing to revelation through human *disegno interno* as a gift from God; further, he attempted to clarify the relationship between

this and sensory experience by prioritising the former and suggesting that through imagination it underpins sensory perception: ‘the senses are only called upon, as it were, to assist in the clarification and enlivening of those inner notions’ (Panofsky 1968, pp. 90, 231 n. 42). As intimated above, consideration of some artists’ quotations suggests that this progression is indeed followed in some painting trajectories, in other words the process begins with *disegno interno* but this then needs to be verified and nourished through experience of external phenomena. However, analyses in Section 2.2 indicate that other trajectories may have external phenomena as their starting points. The suggestion that *disegno interno* as divine spark cannot operate by itself but depends on the senses is potentially a challenge, but Zuccaro must have been aware of possible objections because he wrote: ‘since the intellect and the senses are subjects to Design and concept, Design, as their Prince, ruler and governor, uses them as his own property’ (Zuccaro 1607, cited by Panofsky 1968, p. 91). In other words, both the human intellect and the human senses are subject to the Divine; and in the present context this means that both inner seeing and sensitivity to external phenomena can be interpreted theologically as God-given.

Painting processes may also be influenced in an individual way by other aspects of brain functioning which are indicated in the following three quotations. The first points to internal dialogue between the left and right brain hemispheres. There is evidence that the left hemisphere is dominant with respect to narrow focusing and analytic interpretational processes and the right with flexible wide attention and holistic integrating processes (Ashbrook and Albright 1997, p. 111; McGilchrist 2009, pp. 39-40). Falken’s internal dialogue while painting seems to involve both, and is reminiscent of some personal internal dialogues of a similar nature. The second quotation illustrates synaesthesia, a neurological condition probably resulting from extra connections within the brain’s sensory processing system. For example, some synaesthetes see colours when they hear sounds (Livingstone 2008, p.198); the quotation suggests that Kandinsky had this condition and detailed evidence that this was the case has been described by Lone and Tyler (2003, pp. 223-226). Third, in addition to the psychological



types identified by Jung, some artists have suffered from psychological disorders, for example Edvard Munch was afflicted by anxiety to the extent that there were allegations of insanity (Prideaux 2005, p.169). Munch's description of his feelings in the quotation suggests that the triggering of his *Scream* paintings by the blood-red sunset scene described earlier may have been connected with his underlying condition. Probably better known is the illness of Vincent van Gogh, diagnosed at the time as epilepsy precipitated by absinthe and subsequently much discussed though not conclusively diagnosed. However, bipolar aspects have been implicated given van Gogh's history of depressive periods alternating with intense wonderfully creative episodes during which he threw himself completely into his work (Blumer 2002, pp. 520, 525).

The theologian and the painter in me provoke one another, but they also help one another to make leaps. The theologian learns to see from the painter before he begins to think. And the painter should learn to think from the theologian, so that he keeps what he paints under control. Is that right? Not completely! The painter in me doesn't allow his painting to be dictated by the theologian... (Herbert Falken 1932-, German painter and Catholic priest, 1995, cited by Kuschel 1999, p. 26).

Blue is the typically heavenly color. Blue unfolds in its lowest depths the element of tranquility. As it deepens toward black, it assumes overtones of a superhuman sorrow. It becomes like an infinite self-absorption into that profound state of seriousness which has, and can have, no end [...] Represented in musical terms, light blue resembles the flute, dark blue the 'cello, darker still the wonderful sounds of the double bass; while in a deep, solemn form the sound of blue can be compared to that of the deep notes of the organ. (Kandinsky 1994, p. 182).

My whole life has been spent walking by the side of a bottomless chasm, jumping from stone to stone. Sometimes I try to leave my narrow path and join the swirling mainstream of life, but I always find myself drawn inexorably back towards the chasm's edge, and there I shall walk until the day I finally fall into the abyss. For as long as I can remember I have suffered from a deep feeling of anxiety which I have tried to express in my art. Without anxiety and illness I should have been like a ship without a rudder. (Munch, cited by Hughes 1991, p. 281).

The aspects of psychology and brain functioning which have been briefly touched on in this section relate to persons in their individuality. Together with the more general innate human characteristics discussed in Section 1.3 they contribute to givens which may sometimes be taken for granted, namely

the sensory and mental processing capabilities which are necessary for any person to receive givens from the three spirals of nature (World 1), culture (World 3) or other people (World 2). In the present context, they are the givens through which any other phenomena are given to painters, which make painterly responses possible, and which influence the diversity of those responses. This is not to take a deterministic standpoint.

Consideration of the immense literature on determinism and free will is outside the scope of this thesis; however, philosophical and neuroscientific debate and research is far from over, and some recent approaches as indicated in the review by Lavazza (2016) are compatible with the combined 'bottom-up and top-down' interpretation of human actions already mentioned in Section 1.3 (Ashbrook and Albright 1997, pp. xxviii, 162).

Phenomenologically, we may also recognise ultimate horizons of knowability from beyond which everything is pure gift, as will be discussed in Section 2.4; and the ever-continuing unpredictable emergence of the new.

## **1.6 The emergence of the new**

The first, second and third spirals form a continuum. Between them and within them there are clear links between past and present, in the unfolding of the cosmos, in biological evolution, and in cultural evolution. Yet there has been a continual emergence of the new, of phenomena which did not exist before - the first stars, the first planets, the first primitive life forms, and the first hominids. Notably for the present study there is the evolutionarily sudden emergence of self-aware, art-making human beings, as implied by the proliferation of cave paintings in south-west Europe from the period 30 - 40,000 BP (Mithen 1998, pp. 171-175). This shift is visualised as the point at which the 'culture' spiral starts emerging from the 'nature' spiral, and from a biblical and theological perspective it is identified by the American theologian Robert Jenson (1930-) with Adam and Eve:

Who were Adam and Eve? They were the first hominid group who by ritual action were embodied before God, made personally available to him. Theology need not join debates about whether, for example, the cave paintings were attempts to control the hunt, were “magic” or “religion.” The painters were human, as we may know simply from the fact of their ritual [...] by the very act of giving visibility to wishes directed beyond themselves, they nevertheless in fact gave up control and worshipped. (Jenson 2001, pp. 59-61).

Subsequently, in painting as with other human endeavours including science, newness keeps irrupting. This is implied in the titles *Art: The Groundbreaking Movements* (Heine 2012) which moves through history from cave paintings to action painting and pop art; and *The Shock of the New: Art and the Century of Change* (Hughes 1991) which looks at the development of modern art from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. All this is in effect part of the onward trajectory of the culture spiral. Continuing newness in art is recognised both philosophically and artistically, for example Marion suggests that an authentic painting ‘imposes in front of every gaze an absolutely new phenomenon, increasing by force the quantity of the visible’ (Marion 2004, p. 25); and the London-based German-Jewish born painter Frank Auerbach (1931-) said:

What I’m not hoping to do is to paint another picture because there are enough pictures in the world. *I’m hoping to make a new thing for the world that remains in the mind like a new species of living thing.* It sounds very grandiloquent. (Auerbach 1978, cited by Lampert 2015, p.142, my italics).

Newness is related to givenness, and both will be considered in following chapters which are organised following *The Three Spirals*. Hence Chapter 3 looks at nature; Chapters 4 and 5 at two different aspects of ‘culture’; and Chapters 6 and 7 at persons, as individuals and in groups respectively. The starting point in each case will be painters’ autobiographical material and other data; phenomenological analysis will follow, and the final section of each chapter will be theological interpretation. But first, Chapter 2 will look at the phenomenological background to the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### GIVENNESS IN PAINTING PROCESSES

#### 2.1 Experiences of givenness

As exemplified at the beginning of Chapter 1 using artists' own words, painting processes include unforeseen experiences of receiving and responding to appearances and events, external, internal, and within the developing paintings themselves. These experiences can reasonably be described using Marion's language of givenness. Chapter 1 also touches briefly on the entering of intentionality into painting processes, with the word being used in the phenomenological sense of the dynamic conscious direction of the mind towards its object. In this chapter, a classification is suggested outlining the various ways in which givenness and intentionality may interact, followed by analyses of such interactions in selected paintings. These demonstrate how intentionalities are not the same as detailed plans, further evidence for which comes from examining some relationships between painters and their paints, brushes and other materials. Intentionality is then examined in more detail together with related phenomenological concepts of intuition, reductions and horizons, as a prelude to introducing Marion's innovatory thinking about the givenness of saturated phenomena. The different ways in which saturated phenomena manifest, relevant to subsequent considerations of revelation, are summarised. Questions are raised about the givenness of phenomena vis-à-vis the role of the artist, to be addressed in subsequent chapters.

#### 2.2 Painting trajectories

Both givenness and intentionality may be experienced in different ways and at different stages of painting processes, with autobiographical material and personal experience suggesting the following ten-part classification A to J of possible pathways or trajectories. The different categories are not meant to

be mutually exclusive; they may be inter-related or follow on from one another.

- A. *Triggering intentionality.* A phenomenon is given to the painter's consciousness, sometimes from outside, sometimes emerging internally, with the effect of triggering an intentionality to paint. The givenness may happen suddenly or gradually, with an example of a 'bursting in' experience being first impressions of Ystradgynlais as expressed in the quotation from Josef Herman in Section 1.1. The phenomenon can be from nature (the first spiral), for example a sunset, a tree, or an animal; or from culture (the second spiral), for example a building, a text, a symphony, a scientific model, a painting or some other image. David Hockney describes how it was 'the accidental juxtaposition of two photographs' (Hockney 1976, p. 247) lying on his studio floor which suggested *Portrait of an Artist* (Hockney 1972). The triggering phenomenon may also come from persons (the third spiral), including the artist's own subjective memories or ideas.
  
- B. *Gut feelings.* The artist experiences a strong sensation or feeling; this is pre-conscious but it emerges into consciousness and transfers into the intentionality to paint. Part of such a process, the movement of the feeling into words, is evident in Edvard Munch's account of the sky become blood, as quoted in Section 1.1. This is the experience which triggered his *Scream* paintings. The trajectory of *Figure in a Landscape* (Weschke 1972), arising from the artist's experience of extreme drunkenness, is described in detail later in this section. Appleton's instinctive responses to landscape features as described in Section 1.3 may be included here, as may some synaesthetic experiences involving cross-connections between the senses, for example sounds or smells experienced as colours.
  
- C. *Returning to the source.* For one reason or another, there is an intentionality to produce a certain type of painting, and the process begins with a given. However, it requires more giving from the source,

hence a painter may return to a landscape or a human model, sometimes repeatedly. For example, Cézanne's biographer, the French author Joachim Gasquet (1873-1921), describes sitting with Cézanne looking out over the Arc valley in Provence, and observes 'This was the landscape Cézanne was painting [...] he had been working for two months on one canvas in the morning, another in the afternoon' (Gasquet 1991, p. 147). The fact that such sources are typically dynamic means that paintings following this trajectory may incorporate different time-dependent aspects of the given. However, some sources are so short-lived, for example childbirth as described in Section 6.4, that actual returning is impossible; painting them must involve returning in memory, and through notes, sketches or photographs.

- D. *Finding the forms*. Following the triggering of intentionality by an idea, the artist may need to find external forms which express that idea. As already exemplified in Section 1.5 with reference to Carr, Gleizes and Metzinger, this trajectory implies that the artists' ideas include an element of inner seeing, for which some correspondence and amplification from external givens is sought. Another example comes from the French painter Henri Matisse (1869-1954): 'I have finally found the object I have wanted for a year. It is a Venetian baroque chair, in varnished silver [...] I was completely bowled over by it' (Matisse 1942, cited by Boyer 2004, p. 36). Matisse liked distinctive chairs, as settings for his models or sometimes as subjects in their own right, as in *The Rocaille Armchair* (Matisse 1946). Frank Auerbach also spoke about finding: 'I have an impulse and I try to find a form for that impulse' (Auerbach 2009, cited by Lampert 2012, p. 27).
- E. *Unblocking*. For one reason or another, there is an intentionality to produce a certain type of painting, and perhaps some progress has already been made, but then the painter starts struggling, is not sure how to continue, and in extreme cases becomes 'stuck'. Something

needs to be given to free the process, and this ‘something’ may be a phenomenon from any of the three spirals which impinges upon or emerges into the painter’s consciousness. The time lapse between becoming stuck and becoming unstuck can be long in some cases, for example Hockney describes how he grappled with *Portrait of an Artist* (Hockney 1972) for about four months, before ‘it *dawned* on me what was wrong’ (Hockney 1976, p. 247, my italics). After this he started afresh with a second version. Even longer is Kandinsky’s experience with *Composition VI* (Kandinsky 1913a), which is described in detail later in this section.

- F. *The mystery of appearance.* A painting is in progress and something emerges which the painter notices and consciously harnesses for the subsequent development of the work. Such givenness may come in various ways, such as colour juxtapositions, shapes emerging from brush strokes, the relationships between light and dark, and facial expressions. As quoted in Section 1.1, Francis Bacon calls this ‘the mystery of appearance.’ In some cases the artist may deliberately experiment (‘mess around’) with the paint directly on the painting, in the hope of encouraging the mystery of appearance. A personal example whilst painting *The Presence of the Lord* (Baker 2007a) is described later in this section.
  
- G. *Going with the flow.* The artist has an intentionality to produce a certain type of painting and achieves this through the deliberate use of methods which in effect hand over some of the painting outcomes, including channels for givenness, to natural forces and the properties of paints and other materials. Drip paintings by the American abstract expressionist painter Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) demonstrate this methodology and are described with other examples in Section 2.3.
  
- H. *Long-term adjustments.* A painting has been developed and may even be ‘finished’, yet there is a lingering sense that something needs to be changed or that more is required. The painting may even have

been put on one side for days, weeks, months or years. Then somehow the necessary actions, such as additions, deletions, re-positionings, re-sizings, or re-colourings become clear. The actions may be given to the painter's consciousness in stages or all at once, and so the painting is at last completed. Evidence of painters changing their work comes from autobiographical accounts, contemporary observations and sometimes through the use of modern analytical techniques. For example, the English landscape painter John Constable (1776-1837) noted in his journal for September 7<sup>th</sup> 1825: 'Set to work on my large picture, took out the old willow stump by the horse, which has improved the picture much; made one or two other alterations' (cited by Leslie 1980, p. 145). The picture is *The Leaping Horse* (Constable 1825), which had already been exhibited at the Royal Academy but which had remained unsold (Royal Academy 2011). The German Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) repeatedly adjusted *The Monk by the Sea* (Friedrich 1809), increasing the sense of solitude. This was reported by visitors to his studio, and two sailing boats which disappeared are still visible using infra-red photography (Mitchell 1993, p. 121).

- I. *Adaptive evolution.* Biological evolution adapts organisms to changing environments; analogically a painting may be adapted in response to changing phenomena. Here the changes are more radical than in [C] which may incorporate different moods of the same phenomenon, or in [H] where the response is to what the picture itself is saying; rather the painter has to cope with new external situations. My personal experience of adaptive evolution is best exemplified by the collaborative paintings described in Section 7.3, in which new situations resulted from successive waves of children's suggestions. An historical example is emerging from multispectral imaging of a well-known painting by the Italian Renaissance polymath Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), namely *The Lady with an Ermine* (da Vinci c. 1489-90). This is believed to be the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, mistress of Leonardo's patron the Duke of Milan, and recent



discoveries described in great detail by Cotte (2014) suggest three stages, first a court portrait with no ermine, second the laborious insertion of a small ermine, and third the changing of the ermine into a larger than life animal. It remains for links to be made between the evolution of the painting and events at the Duke's court including the Duke's induction into the Order of the Ermine (Cotte 2014, pp. 38, 218), however the final stage has been interpreted as transformation of the ermine into 'an heraldic animal representing the Duke's martial prowess' (Cotte 2014, p. 200).

- J. *Retrospective realisations*. Artists may see things in a well-developed or finished painting which were not consciously painted but which can be retrospectively recognised as meaningful givens. Alternatively, viewers may see such phenomena which, when pointed out, are accepted by the artist and incorporated into his or her thinking. Personal examples of both scenarios are given later in this section. However, viewers' interpretations are not always acceptable, for example the English painter Robert Bates (1943-) describes the experience of having people read things into his paintings which are not there as far as he is concerned: 'It just makes me feel a stranger to the paintings' (Bates 1974, p.22).

This typology as a whole may serve as an analytical tool and as such is applied to what follows, namely explorations of eight paintings chosen as far as possible for their diversity. Four paintings are my own and four have been selected from published autobiographical material, hence with limited choice because in-depth personal accounts about specific paintings are rare. These detailed analyses are meant to be illustrative of a range of possibilities relevant to the many paintings mentioned in Chapters 3 to 6.

Figure 2.1 shows *Slates Lane in the Snow* (Baker 1961), illustrating a short, quite straightforward [A] trajectory painted when I was seventeen. The scene is of a lane near where I used to live and where, one winter morning, I was captivated by the hedge-to-hedge snowdrifts. I responded the same day,



Figure 2.1. *Slates Lane in the Snow* (Baker 1961).

Ilkley, Yorkshire, 1961-62 winter. Oil on hardboard, 36 x 56 cm.<sup>6</sup>

painted most of the picture quickly *en plein air* and finished it indoors, with the whole process taking only a few hours. In phenomenological terms, it may be said that the givenness of the phenomena of the snowdrifts and the resulting transformation of the lane aroused my intentionality, and the painting was a way of observing and exploring the phenomena more intensely. In retrospect the painting style suggests that I was unconsciously, naively, deploying a Renaissance understanding that the work of the painter is to imitate nature as closely as possible; and that I was also unconsciously using learned Renaissance techniques of one point perspective. Moreover, I was working innocently; there were no considerations of earning money, trying to impress, rivalry, or having to produce the painting for any sort of project - all factors with which professional artists have to contend.

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout the thesis, dimensions of paintings are given in centimetres with the height first.

The trajectory of *Figure in a Landscape* (Weschke 1972) is more complex. The German-born painter Karl Weschke (1925-2005) was a prisoner of war who stayed in England after the Second World War, eventually settling in Cornwall. His paintings have been described as 'existential' (Lewison 2005). *Figure in a Landscape* shows a collapsed, almost disintegrating figure, probably male, face downwards on the earth and raising himself just a little on his arms. The landscape recedes to a gently curved hill, and the painting including the sky is dominated by earth colours - ochres and umbers. From the following account, triggering of the painting by a visceral sensing experience [B] may be identified, followed by a pause during which Weschke's intentionality was searching for a suitable setting [D], eventually given in the form of a particular landscape. The painting took a long time during which it was revised including recolouring [H].

I went to a wedding and got tremendously drunk. I had collapsed in the car and I was lying out in the yard and everybody had gone to continue the reception somewhere else. I was just lying there with the sun blazing on me, and I literally could not move [B]: the feeling of very oppressive heat [B], and the landscape hanging above me like two fat clouds, and the burnt colour of the hill behind, being a hot colour. I was trying to push myself up from the ground [B] [...]

I had to find a setting for this figure because I was lying in the lane, and the idea of painting a side view of a wall running down for a couple of hundred yards was just too boring. I thought I must find an identity of place. I had to be particular to the point, at least, of identifying that particular figure with the setting [...] It was a direct use of landscape. I always do use the landscape. I use it like one uses a brush. It is part of my medium. As the figure made a particular curve this way or that way I tried to find something [D] that would help to contradict this curve, to set up a tension. I used anything that was of kinship to me in trying to find a placing for my figure, and I just found [D] this rather nice curve which lent itself to the painting. I spent a long time on the painting [...] It took about three or four months, but not of course working all the time on it. It changed a lot in that time from Bacon yellow to my own colours [H] [...] on some levels I feel an affinity with Bacon. He speaks of distress. Now when I did this painting I found myself actually using pastiche passages in order to make distress. But after a while you catch yourself and think, good Lord, I am going to paint a very bad Bacon. Then I came back to my own thing [H]. That did not happen until I decided to find [D] a particular setting for the figure. (Weschke 1974, pp. 44-45)

An extreme case of a Type E trajectory is provided by *Composition VI* (Kandinsky 1913a). *Composition VI* is a large complex colourful abstract painting in which contradictory elements - different colours, lines, shapes,

and areas of roughness and smoothness, are meant to evoke and bring together both catastrophe and calm. Kandinsky gives a detailed account of his painting process, starting [A] with an idea of the Deluge. However, he quickly became stuck notwithstanding his intentionality reaching out through experimenting with sketches. Eventually the way forward [E] was given through his own glass-painting which he saw in a completely fresh way.

I carried this picture around in my mind for a year and a half, and often thought I would not be able to finish it. My starting point was the Deluge [A]. My point of departure was a glass-painting that I had made more for my own satisfaction [...] When the glass-painting was finished, there arose in me the desire to treat this theme as the subject of a Composition, and I saw at that time fairly clearly how I should do it [A]. But this feeling quickly vanished, and I lost myself amidst corporeal forms, which I had painted merely in order to heighten and clarify my image of the picture. I gained in confusion rather than in clarity. In a number of sketches I dissolved the corporeal forms; in others I sought to achieve the impression by purely abstract means. But it didn't work. This happened because I was still obedient to the expression of the Deluge, instead of heeding the expression of the word "Deluge." I was ruled not by the inner sound, but by the external impression. Weeks passed and I tried again, but still without success [...]

My glass-painting was at that time away on exhibition. When it came back and I saw it again, I at once received the same inner jolt [E] I had experienced on creating the glass-painting. But I was mistrustful, and did not now believe I would be able to create the big picture. Still, I looked from time to time at the glass-painting that hung in my studio. Every time I was struck [E], first by the colors, then by the compositional element, and then by the linear form itself, without reference to the object. This glass-painting had become detached from me. It appeared to me strange that I had painted it. And it affected me just like many real objects or concepts that have the power of awakening within me, by means of a vibration of the soul, purely pictorial images, and that finally lead me to create a picture. Finally, the day came, and a well-known, tranquil, inner tension made me fully certain [E]. I at once made, almost without corrections, the final design, which in general pleased me very much [E]. Now I knew that under normal circumstances I would be able to paint the picture... (Kandinsky 1994, pp. 385-388).

In the following transcript, Henri Matisse is interviewed by the scholar and writer Georges Charbonnier (1921-1990). They are discussing *Dance* (Matisse 1910), a painting produced for the Russian art collector Sergei Shchukin. The farandole is a French folk dance and the Moulin de la Galette a windmill in Paris, being used at the time for various entertainments and often frequented by artists. The large painting shows five nude figures, painted in terracotta red, dancing vigorously hand to hand in a ring, on a

simple background of green ground and deep blue sky. It has been called a 'sumptuous masterpiece' and 'a chromatic miracle' (Jones 2008). The starting point for the painting is a commission, hence an intentionality to paint a picture [A], and the given which presents itself from recent memory is the farandole dance [A]. There is a return visit [C] to look at the dance again, and a [B] influenced trajectory takes over, with some evidence of kinetic-musical-visual synaesthesia.

HM: When I had to compose a dance for Moscow [A], I had just been to the Moulin de la Galette on Sunday afternoon. And I watched the dancing. I especially watched the farandole [A]. Often, in the middle or at the end of a session there was a farandole. This farandole was very gay. The dancers hold each other by the hand, they run across the room, and they wind around the people who are milling about [...] it's all extremely gay. And all that to a bouncing tune. An atmosphere I knew very well. When I had a composition to do, I returned to the Moulin de la Galette to see the farandole again [C]. Back at home I composed my dance on a canvas of four meters, singing the same tune I had heard at the Moulin de la Galette [B], so that the entire composition and all the dancers are in harmony and dance to the same rhythm.

GC: Did the idea of using the theme of the dance exist before the mural painting, or is it rather the surface and form of the wall that suggested the theme to you?

HM: No, it's not the wall, but because I particularly like dance; it's because I saw more in dance: expressive movements, rhythmic movements, music that I like. This dance was in me [B], I didn't need to warm myself up: I proceeded with elements that were already alive.

(Interview 1950, cited by Flam 1995, pp. 189-190).

*The Presence of the Lord* (Baker 2007a) shown in Figure 2.2 started with an idea arising [A] when I was in my local churchyard, Ruyton-XI-Towns. St. John the Baptist church can be viewed through a 1,700 year old multi-stemmed yew tree (Chetan and Brueton 1994, p. 282), and I had a mental image or inner seeing [A], a type of occurrence described in general terms in Section 1.5. The image was of the church and tree held in God's hands, saying in effect 'Welcome to this place where people have worshipped for centuries, may you be aware of God's presence here' [A]. My aroused intentionality was then directed to recording the tree, the church building, and a colleague's hands as a model, using photography, sketches and notes. As the painting developed I made several visits to the churchyard [C] to resolve questions about the tree and building. Painting the hands did not



Figure 2.2. *The Presence of the Lord* (Baker 2007a).

Acrylic on fibreboard. 60 x 80 cm.

St John the Baptist Church, Ruyton-XI-Towns, Shropshire.

work at first because they looked as if someone had been buried accidentally and was trying to escape! I then ‘messed around’ with paint [F] with an acceptable result eventually emerging through blurring of the wrists, extending dark colours into the palms, and partially integrating the hands with the tree trunks. Realisation then dawned that these could be seen as Christ’s crucified hands [F], and there was now a link with the hands in the stained glass window; hence I continued painting the yew tree foliage with the idea of evoking stained glass tracery. Subsequent theological reflection focused on how the painting process had highlighted that the only way to paint God’s hands *must* be incarnationally [J].

Chris Ofili (1968-) is a British Turner prize-winning painter who has been based in Trinidad since 2005. *Iscaiot Blues* (Ofili 2006) has been described



as 'the most beautiful picture made in this short century, and something more besides' (Darwent 2010). There are musicians and tropical vegetation on the left and a hanging figure on the right, semi-silhouetted in black against a deep blue background. In the following transcript, Ofili is interviewed by the journalist Ekow Eshun, and the origins of the painting can be identified as both observations and feelings [A] and [B] of Trinidad evening givens. There was then a pause of indecision, resolved by an idea [E], and only after that did the 'narrative' of the painting begin '*to construct itself*' (my italics). Ofili's language here conveys the sense in which the painting process itself brings forth a story which was not in the painter's mind at the outset [J].

EE: The great theme that you've allowed to emerge through the work over the years is religion. *Iscairiot Blues* 2006, for example, is a very powerful painting with its mix of the everyday and the extraordinary.

CO: *Iscairiot Blues* was made here and came out of my observations and feelings of Trinidad [A] and [B]. There are people playing instruments enjoying an evening in a relative darkness. I can hear the sound of the wood creaking as the hanging figure swings [B]. And I can't necessarily get that in the painting, that sound, but it was there when I was trying to paint the painting.

EE: How did the figure of Judas enter the painting? How does he physically enter the frame?

CO: Judas wasn't there at the beginning. He was there because I had a vacant, undecided vertical on the right-hand side of the painting. After I had the idea to put the hanging figure there [E], the narrative began to construct itself [J]. I was brought up to think that Judas was the bad guy, that Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss and that he was responsible for the persecution of the Son of God. In further readings, there's an understanding that Judas knew that in order for man to be saved, Jesus would have to die. And the only way for that to happen would be if he was betrayed by those closest to him. So it was interesting that he could be transformed from this 'baddie' to a 'goodie' all of a sudden. There's an energy around this that I felt was worth finding a picture to depict. The figure of Judas stayed because it had enough of an ambiguity about why he was there and it allowed the painting to separate into two halves, two sections. I was interested in a kind of violence, a psychological, passive violence, leaving a dead figure hanging [J]. And the kind of stillness, and the nonchalance of the musicians.

(Cited by Nesbitt 2010, p. 99),

A story also emerged in *The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* (Baker 2004), Figure 2.3. The starting point was an idea [A] in the context of theological study. The painting looks at the myth of Genesis 2:8 - 3:24 in



Figure 2.3.

*The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* (Baker 2004).

Acrylic on fibreboard.  
80 x 60 cm.

York St John University.

evolutionary and psychological terms. Adam and Eve are brought together as one sexually ambivalent figure representing humanity, after all, Genesis 3:6 tells us that Adam 'was with her' when Eve took the fruit. The hands emerging from the mist represent the evolutionary emergence of self-consciousness [A], but could also express the process of coming to new stages of consciousness within the life of an individual (Edinger 1992, p. 21). Following the arousal of intentionality by the idea, I assembled components for the picture - personal photographs of various branches, figs, and hands on the one hand, and theological, anthropological and psychological ideas in the literature on the other. After the painting was



finished came the realisation [J] that I had not painted any limits to the tree canopy, and in this respect the picture differed from most previous interpretations of this subject I had seen, for example van der Goes (c.1479) and Cranach the Elder (1526). With further thinking and research this led to the idea that encounter with the tree is a process rather than a single event [J], resonating with the old Jewish legend that the tree forms a hedge around the tree of life, and only those who have ‘cleared a path [...] through the tree of knowledge can come close to the tree of life’ (Ginzberg 2008, p. 49).

Another unpredicted [J] effect is the appearance of a human brain with left and right hemispheres in the rock formation in *The Rock of Ages*, Figure 2.4 (Baker 1999). The rocks in the lower right-hand area are a reasonably accurate depiction, painted from personal photographs taken for the purpose, of a limestone outcrop in Burrington Combe, Somerset. The original idea [A] was to paint this scene symbolically, for it was in the cleft dividing this cliff that the Anglican priest Augustus Toplady is said to have sheltered from a storm in 1763, following which he wrote the well-known hymn *Rock of Ages* (Toplady 1775). This was followed by another idea [A], to experiment with a [G] type methodology as described in section 2.3. The brain was not noticed initially by me but by a viewer of the painting; what I had seen symbolically as the rock-cleft representing Toplady’s ‘riven side’ from which flowed water and blood, can also be seen as the interhemispheric or longitudinal brain fissure. Here is another example of the beginning of a train of thought, in this case about methods of showing visually how theologically significant scenes exist both inside and outside one’s head. Herbert Falken seems to have had a related idea, expressed in *Mein Gehirn ist meine Dornenkrone* (*My Brain is my Crown of Thorns*) (Falken 1979). Falken’s painting shows a brain with its fissure within a dimly visible skull, leaning over, torture suggested by a mass of spiky irregular lines emanating from it.

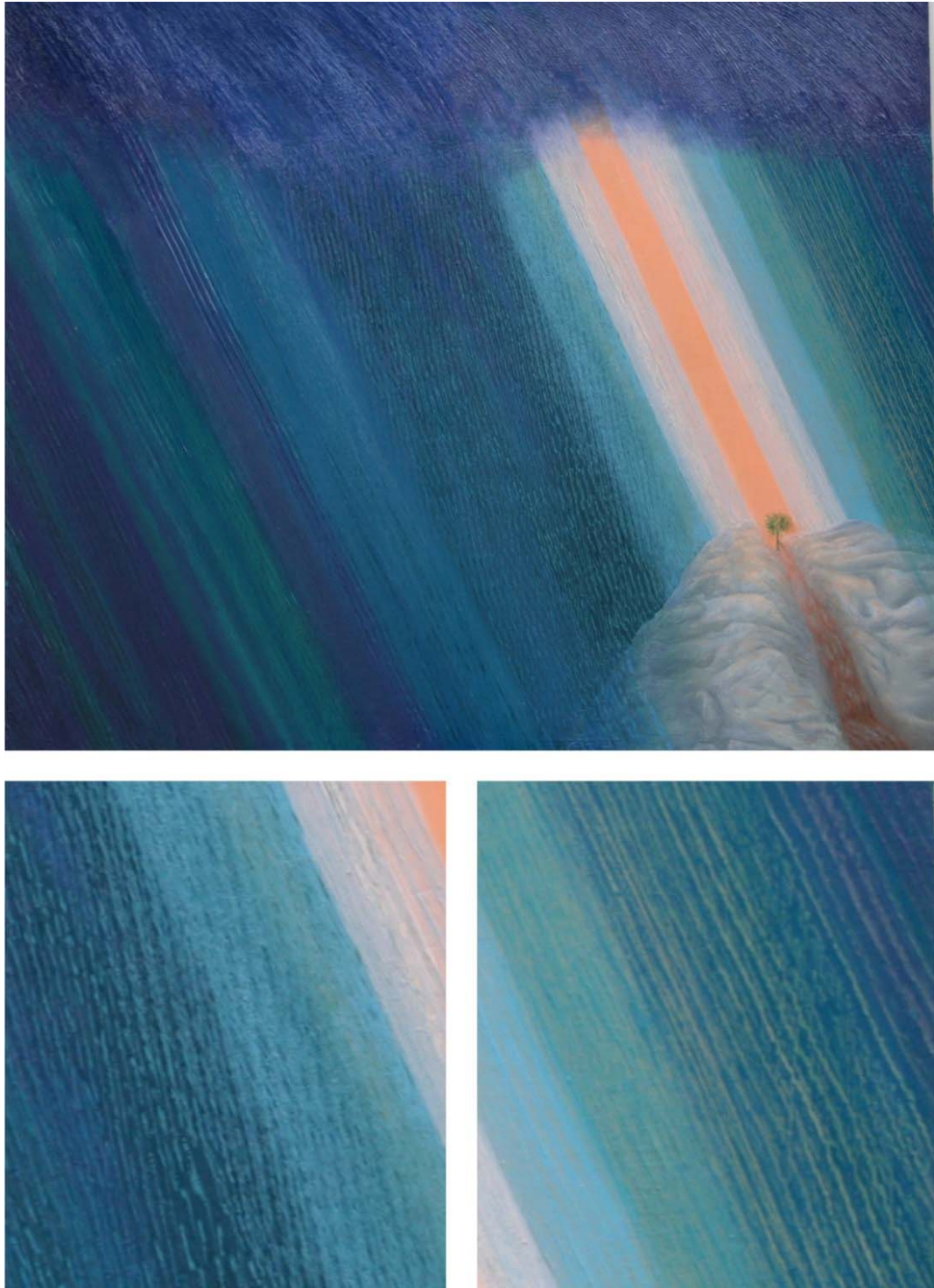


Figure 2.4.

Above: *The Rock of Ages*. Burrington Combe, Somerset (Baker 1999).

Below: Details of paintwork.

Oil over acrylic on hardboard. 48 x 59 cm.

Some aspects of the above classification showing how givenness of ideas and images can resolve experiences of being stuck or unfinished are reminiscent of accounts of creativity from the scientific point of view. For example the American physicist and scientific philosopher Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996) describes how, in contrast to 'normal' science, difficulties may sometimes be overcome not by deliberate method but by 'sudden and unstructured events', with scientists speaking of 'scales falling from the eyes', or of a 'lightning flash' enabling new insights (Kuhn 1996, p. 122).

Such experiences were analysed further by the American theoretical physicist Murray Gell-Mann (1929-), who was involved in a discussion group of physicists, biologists, painters and poets. Each described a personal creative experience, and notwithstanding differences in details, there was 'remarkable' agreement with respect to process. Three stages were distinguished. First there was hard work for days, weeks, months or years, filling the mind with the problem. Second, a time came 'when further conscious thought was useless.' Third, a sudden breakthrough of the crucial idea occurred - typically whilst the person concerned was engaged in some other activity, or after sleep. Later, it was realised that these stages had previously been identified by the German physiologist and physicist Hermann von Helmholtz (1821-1894) as 'saturation,<sup>7</sup> incubation and illumination' (Gell-Mann 1995, pp. 264-265). They can be recognised in some artists' experiences already mentioned, for example the Kandinsky case history and the trajectory of Hockney's *Portrait of an Artist* (Hockney 1972). The latter demonstrates saturation described by Hockney as prolonged 'struggling' and 'fiddling', incubation in the form of 'leaving it and working on other things' and illumination indicated by the words 'it dawned on me what was wrong' (Hockney 1976, p. 247).

However, as the A – J typology indicates, these three stages are not easily recognisable in all painting trajectories, but are associated particularly with

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<sup>7</sup> The way in which the word 'saturation' is used here differs from Marion's phenomenological usage as described in Section 2.5.

Type E unblocking, and possibly with Type H long-term adjustments where the temporary setting aside of pictures corresponds to the incubation stage.

The mathematician Henri Poincaré added a fourth stage - verification - in 1908, the importance of which was recognised by Gell-Mann (1995, p. 265). Scientifically, verification may be equated with hypothesis testing through experimentation and observation, but what is the equivalent for judging paintings? There is Marion's concept of 'authenticity' in paintings as mentioned at the end of Section 1.6, related to their newness as phenomena and hence their adding to the quantity of the visible. The French Romantic artist Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) emphasised the primacy of imagination 'The finest works of art are those that express the pure fantasy of the artist' (Delacroix 1995, p. 284); and the pioneering Russian abstract painter Kazimir Malevich (1878-1935), described by Hughes (1991, p. 82) as 'spiritually oriented', wrote:

If one insists on judging an art work on the basis of the virtuosity of the objective representation - the verisimilitude of the illusion - and thinks he sees in the objective representation itself a symbol of the inducing emotion, he will never partake of the gladdening content of a work of art.

The general public is still convinced today that art is bound to perish if it gives up the imitation of "dearly-loved" reality and so it observes with dismay how the hated element of pure feeling - abstraction - makes more and more headway...(Malevich 1964, p. 95).

In other words, Malevich challenged the idea that paintings should be valued according to how well they imitate 'reality'; however, his comment is loaded and raises the question about who is qualified to judge a painting. Personal experience suggests that it *is* possible for members of 'the general public' to be gladdened by representational works of art. Issues concerning judging, valuing or 'verifying' pictures will recur in this and subsequent chapters, with conclusions concerning the relationships between value and givenness being drawn in Section 8.2.

### 2.3 Going with the flow

Looking in more detail at Type G trajectories in the above classification, further evidence that intentionalities are not the same as detailed plans comes from examining the relationship between painters and their brushes, paints and other materials. As expressed by the British painter and philosopher Nigel Wentworth (1964-), the materials are not merely things to be used; they take on a 'lived significance for the painter' and become 'something related' to the painter through the development of 'give and take' (Wentworth 2004, p. 45). My own experience is in line with Wentworth's observations, and an example is illustrated in the above-mentioned *The Rock of Ages*, Figure 2.4. Much of the painting is devoted to Toplady's storm envisaged as sheets of rain slanting down; and the effects shown in the details of Figure 2.4 result from the interactions between my willed use of materials, application of paint in layers, different properties of slow-drying oil paints and fast-drying acrylic paints, and the distinctive tracks of old graining combs used in addition to brushes. This was pleasurable experimentation, leading to Type G effects which could not have been predicted in detail.

Works by the American expressionist Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), the French artist Niki de Saint Phalle (1930-2002), the British winner of the 2002 Turner Prize Keith Tyson (1969-) and the British artist Jessica Warboys (1977-) provide more extreme and abstract examples of the dynamic relationships between artists and the properties of materials. Pollock's drip paintings, de Saint Phalle's shooting paintings, Tyson's nature paintings and Warboys' sea paintings all involve the artists giving freedom for natural forces such as gravity and tides, and properties such as the viscosity, flow rates, and miscibility of paints, to affect the paintings' Type G outcomes. The forms and colours of Tyson's nature paintings are determined 'by the reactions between paints and chemicals when combined and poured at different angles and temperatures onto aluminium plates' (Venables 2008, p. 4), and Tyson comments:

A lot of the work is reminiscent of certain structures, such as cell formations, mountains and trees [...] and the same forces of Nature that created those forms are sort of replicated in these paintings. It wasn't intentional<sup>8</sup> but I think there's a very interesting connection there.

(Tyson 2008, cited by Venables 2008, p. 6).

De Saint Phalle's shooting paintings used polythene bags filled with paint which were placed against a blockboard backing and covered with textured white plaster. Spectators were invited to shoot at this construction, 'to release the colour and make it come alive. It was very exciting to see the red, blue and green coming out and dripping down the picture' (de Saint Phalle 1988). Warboys applies pigments to large canvases which are left on the shore to record the actions of waves, wind and sand (Tate 2017, p. 23). Such methods clearly preclude intentions in the sense of detailed pre-existing designs, but highlight the primacy of intentionality in the sense of the dynamic conscious direction of the mind towards the production of a painting. This is combined with artistic openness to givenness through natural processes, as suggested both by Tyson's and de Saint Phalle's words above and by Warboys' comment 'I like to be surprised, to see something unexpected' (Warboys 2011). However, the freedom given to natural forces by these artists does not mean that their paintings lack all artistic control, for these methods require interactive physicality. Eye, brain and hand are involved with the assembling and deployment of specific materials, the pouring of paint, or the placement of paint bags.

Pollock's working process for his drip paintings was captured in a short film by Hans Namuth (SFMOMA 2000); also in photographs by Namuth and by Martha Holmes as reproduced in Kleeblatt (2008, pp. 3, 22). All these show Pollock working with large canvases flat on the ground, with a can of paint in his left hand and a stick, brush, or other tool in his right, pouring, dripping and flicking paint. The film suggests significant control in the handling of paint; and the art conservator James Coddington in his study of Pollock's

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<sup>8</sup> Intentional here means planned, in other words Tyson is saying that forms in his paintings were not planned; however in phenomenological terms there was clearly intentionality to produce a picture.

methods concluded that he 'had a pretty clear notion of how his materials handled' and this level of consciousness liberated him 'to paint as unconsciously as he does' (Coddington 2004). Artistic control is also borne out by Elkins' analysis of *Number 1 (Lavender Mist)* (Pollock 1950), which identifies four levels of detail, the first three contributing to the structure visible from an arm's length away, and the fourth, closer in, with finer threads and small droplets (Elkins 1999, pp. 89-94).

In the following comments on Pollock's painting, the Belgian art theorist Thierry de Duve (1944-) uses the words intended, intentional and intentions in the phenomenological sense of intentionality as mentioned above:

Pollock paints a picture. He *intended* to paint a picture, not to dance around the studio, tossing paint all over [...] We art historians and critics think we know that Pollock intended to paint a picture, because a picture is what he did, not an oversized doodle. But in fact, Pollock's picture is a picture not because we know but because we judge it to be one, and we so judge partly because we [...] assume that Pollock intended his work to be seen and appreciated as a picture. We *must* assume this, and the reason we do is that we have learned that pictures are intentional objects - in the sense that they are both the outcome and the bearer, the carrier, the medium of intentions on the part of their maker... (De Duve 2012, p. 2. De Duve's italics).

Pollock, who experienced extremes of confidence and insecurity, sometimes doubted that even this primary intentionality had been fulfilled. In an interview with B.H. Friedman, Pollock's wife Lee Krasner Pollock said that with reference to a very good painting he had once asked her "Is this a painting?" Not is this a good painting, or a bad one, but *a painting!* (L.K. Pollock cited by Friedman 1969, p. 8, Friedman's italics).

What were the inner processes associated with Pollock's pouring, dripping and flicking of paint? There are clues in Pollock's own words, in observations from his wife and others, and in the paintings themselves. In replying to a critic who described his work as chaos with 'Complete lack of structural organization. Total absence of technique', Pollock said 'No chaos, damn it' (Coddington 2004). Further comments give more details about Pollock's unique 'air painting' process:

"Jackson told me that he wasn't just throwing the paint", recalls Nick Carone, "he was delineating some object, some real thing, from a distance above the canvas." Lee called it "working in the air", recreating "aerial forms which then landed." Another eyewitness described how Jackson would "take his stick or brush out of the paint can and then, in a cursive sweep, pass it over the canvas high above it, so that the viscous paint would form trailing patterns which hover over the canvas before they settle upon it, and then fall into it and then leave a trace of their own passage. He is not drawing on the canvas so much as in the air above it" [...] He called his new images "memories arrested in space." (Cited by Naifeh and Smith 1992, pp. 539-540).

With respect to his images, Pollock said 'When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I am doing. It is only after a sort of "get acquainted" period that I see what I have been about' (Karmel 1999, p.18, cited by Hagman 2010, p. 135). However, rather more informatively about his unconscious, he also said 'I'm very representational some of the time, and a little all of the time. But when you're painting out of your unconscious, figures are bound to emerge' (O'Connor and Thaw 1978, p. 241, cited by Delahunty 2015, p. 20). Lee Krasner Pollock also observed the representational dimension, pointing out that she had the advantage of seeing his paintings evolve:

Many of them, many of the most abstract, began with more or less recognizable imagery - heads, parts of the body, fantastic creatures. Once I asked Jackson why he didn't stop the painting when a given image was exposed. He said, 'I choose to veil the imagery' [...] With the black-and-whites he chose mostly to expose the imagery.  
(L.K. Pollock, cited by Friedman 1969, p. 7).

Consistent with this observation is the comment of Delahunty (2015 p. 20) that 'the dialectic between figuration and abstraction played a consistent role in Pollock's visual language.' An early innovative painting with veiled imagery, a 'turning point for American art' (UIMA 2017) is the immense *Mural* (Pollock 1943) commissioned by Peggy Guggenheim and produced during a short period of intense activity following weeks of being 'blocked' (UIMA 2017). The unblocking began with memories of wild horses that Pollock had seen one summer in the American West. He said that he had a vision of a stampede of 'cows and horses and antelopes and buffaloes. *Everything* is charging across that goddamn surface' (Pollock cited by Naifeh and Smith 1992, p. 468, Naifeh and Smith's italics). However, in the finished painting it



is hardly possible to see recognisable images in the rhythmic swirling colours.

In contrast, human figures appear in many of the black-and-whites, a distinctive series of twenty-eight paintings produced in 1951. Unlike his better-known drip paintings with their many coloured layers filling the picture space, the black-and-whites have only two layers, black enamel paint and the unprimed cotton duck fabric whose absorptive properties contributed to the painting process (Delahunty 2015, pp. 17-18). Bare fabric is an important component of the finished pictures. The human imagery is acknowledged in the names appended to some of them, for example *Number 3 (Image of Man)* (Pollock 1951a), *Number 5 (Elegant Lady)* (Pollock 1951b) and *Number 23 (Frogman)* (Pollock 1951c).

Based upon these various pieces of evidence, a tentative analysis in terms of the A to J classification is that a Pollock painting started with the givenness of an inner phenomenon, an idea or a mental image [A]. At least in the case of *Mural* (Pollock 1943) there is documented evidence of unblocking [E] through a 'vision', a mental image of a stampede. Pollock's images became subconscious as the process moved into physicality [B]. This involved him interacting with his paintings totally, with his mind and the whole of his body united in seemingly 'enlivening and relaxing' creative experience (Hagman 2010, p. 136). The painting, utilising the properties of the paint and tools [G], expressed something of the original mental image, and at least with Pollock's later work was carried out in the air above the canvas. In the case of the black-and-whites, this is where the process finished. With other paintings, [G] continued, with representational images being 'veiled' (using Pollock's language) within increasing layers of abstraction.

## 2.4 Phenomenological concepts

It was suggested in Chapter 1 that experiences of givenness while painting

challenge theories which assume that artists have control over their work based on their pre-existing specific intentions, in other words detailed mental designs or plans. Wentworth (2004) came to a similar conclusion in his book *The Phenomenology of Painting*. This draws upon the work of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), who was an influence on Jean-Luc Marion (e.g. Marion 2002a, pp. 337-338, n. 93). Wentworth states:

...a painter does not have an idea, or representation, of the precise end he wishes to achieve, neither at the beginning when he sets out to paint, nor at each stage along the way when he changes something on the canvas [...]. The painter does not know exactly what the end-product is to look like and so cannot intentionally work towards it. In other words, because he does not have an idea of the precise end he wishes to achieve, the concrete actions he actually performs which lead to the realisation of the end-product are not governed by, and cannot be governed by, intentions to bring about this end-product. This means that there are no intentions in the painter's mind that determine such things as the precise colours he uses, the tonal values he works with, the exact structure of the composition, or the interrelations between these things in the overall work. (Wentworth 2004, pp. 7-8).

In contrast to the common usage of the word 'intention' as above, intentionality in the phenomenological sense was understood by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) as the fundamental property of consciousness. Recognising that consciousness is always consciousness of something (Lewis and Staehler 2010, p. 23), Husserl described intentionality as follows. Confusingly, he uses the word 'intention' in this quotation to mean not a detailed plan but what was subsequently named 'intentionality'. Further, the word 'intuition' is used here in a phenomenological rather than a Jungian sense:

The intention is directed toward its object; it does not want to be a merely empty intending toward it; it wants to go to the object itself - to the object itself, that is, to an intuition that gives the object itself, to an intuition that is in itself the consciousness of having a self. But the intention does not really just want to drive at coming into contact with the intended object in a corresponding intuition of the self, merely to find, for instance, that what was prefigured has been brought to fulfillment; even then it is still unsatisfied and strives onward from one closer determination to another, again and again.' (Husserl 2001, p. 126).

Intentionality is thus not a superficial noticing of an object, but the energetic striving of the consciousness towards that object, and 'intuition' means that the intentionality is fulfilled because the object, either external or the indwelling presence of a mental object, is directly apprehended. This givenness, this 'presence in intuition' is what underlies Husserl's 'principle of principles' (Horner 2005, p. 28), namely that:

*every primordial dator Intuition is a source of authority (Rechtsquelle) for knowledge, that whatever presents itself in "intuition" in primordial form (as it were in its bodily reality), is simply to be accepted as it gives itself out to be, though only within the limits in which it then presents itself.*  
(Husserl 2012, p. 43, Husserl's italics).

This principle was an important starting point for Marion (Marion 1998, pp. 8-11), whose own modified translation is:

*every originally giving intuition is a source of right for cognition - that everything that offers itself originally to us in intuition (in its fleshly actuality, so to speak) must simply be received for what it gives itself, but without passing beyond the limits in which it gives itself.*  
(Marion 2002a, p. 12, Marion's italics).

The relationship between intuition and phenomena has also been expressed as 'intuition gives the phenomenon, the phenomenon gives itself through intuition', hence intuition as givenness ('donation') comes before our consciousness of having received anything (Marion and Carlson 1994, pp. 581-582).

Givenness in the sense of an intuition meeting or filling an intentionality is by no means the whole story. It is suggested in Chapter 1 that all phenomena which appear to the human consciousness pass through two filters, a World 1 sensory filter including genetic predispositions and the biological characteristics of human vision; and a World 3 cultural filter including the influence of previous knowledge, and scientific, theological or aesthetic concepts and theories. Husserl, in his pioneering work on phenomenological reduction, sought to escape from what he calls the 'natural standpoint' of our consciousness directed towards the world (Husserl 2012, pp. 51-60), with all

its judgements and theorising. The reduction attempts to step back from this attitude towards objects and instead see how they are given to us, in other words how experience is actually lived. Whilst Husserl sometimes uses the concepts of reduction and *epoché* (from the Greek for suspension) interchangeably, two closely related actions can be distinguished (Lewis and Staehler 2010, pp. 14-15), namely the initial *epoché*, suspension or bracketing of judgements about the world, followed by the reduction which redirects our attention. In this context the word reduction does not mean diminution but, from its Latin root, returning or restoration 'to a more primordial mode' (Appelbaum 2012, p. 1).

Suspension of the 'natural standpoint', in this case exemplified by the scientific, cultural and theological modelling in Chapter 1, is in no way a denial of its existence. This is made plain, for example, by Husserl's words about science:

Thus *all sciences which relate to this natural world*, though they stand never so firm to me, though they fill me with wondering admiration, though I am far from any thought of objecting to them in the least degree, *I disconnect them all, I make absolutely no use of their standards, I do not appropriate a single one of the propositions that enter into their systems, even though their evidential value is perfect, I take none of them, no one of them serves me for a foundation* – so long, that is, as it is understood, in the way these sciences themselves understand it, as a truth *concerning the realities* of this world. *I may accept it only after I have placed it in the bracket.*  
(Husserl 2012, p. 59, Husserl's italics).

Phenomenological reduction has been described as resembling Eastern mindfulness meditation. Both are intentional processes of accepting experiences as they come to us, whilst bracketing distractions, such as trains of thought leading off in various directions, in order to prevent them from interfering with what is experienced. However, whilst methodologically similar, the aims are different, soteriological in the case of meditation, and rigorous examination of consciousness in the case of reduction (Patrik 1994, pp. 37-38).

In applying phenomenological reductions, three different positions are reached successively by Husserl, Husserl's former student the influential German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), and Marion following his detailed analysis of Husserl and Heidegger in *Reduction and Givenness* (Marion 1998). The three positions are illustrated by Marion's reductions of an imaginary painting in *Being Given* (Marion 2002a, pp. 40-52), his first detailed consideration of painting in his trilogy and the place where his reduction to givenness is first presented with a worked example. He does not at this stage introduce the related concept of saturated phenomena, highly relevant to painting processes; this comes later in the trilogy and will be considered in the next section.

In the case of Marion's imaginary example, as is usual with philosophical examination of paintings, the perspective is of the viewer rather than the painter; however, the following summary of Marion's analysis sets the scene for discussing painters' experiences subsequently. Marion describes his phenomenon as an ordinary painting, such as a 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch scene with rustic house, people and animals, a table with produce, a jug of milk, a basket of flowers, all bathed in a warm late-afternoon light (Marion 2002a, p. 40).

First, a Husserlian reduction brings us to the position of experiencing the painting as a subsisting object, making its presence manifest to our intentional consciousness. At the lowest level this is reminiscent of the Cheselden case history described in Chapter 1; or the painting may be seen, for example, as an object for maintenance in an art gallery, as a saleable item in the art market, or for art-historical research (Heidegger 2002, p. 19). However, Marion points out that the painting is more than its subsisting objectness, and the visible in the painting 'is not closed up and in its subsistence but in proportion to the degree to which it is disconnected from it' (Marion 2002a, p. 41). The painting is self-referential, with the frame marking the fact that the visible within the painting does not belong to the world of visible objects which can be used and manipulated. The frame says, in effect:

this colored space is not a collection of colors really available here as an object; it is rather the visibility of what appears without however being objectified. The house [...] is not here on the wall but, framed, appears here as such, therefore remaining essentially elsewhere - where?  
(Marion 2002a, p. 44).

Marion also brings 'ready-made' works of art into his argument: 'A *ready-made* wins its phenomenality only contrary to its subsisting material, contrary to its first object' (Marion 2002a, p. 41, Marion's italics). He does not refer specifically to that pioneer of ready-mades, the French-born American artist Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), but *Fountain* (Duchamp 1917) is a well-known example, a standard urinal laid flat on its back and signed 'R. Mutt 1917'. An anonymous article published at the time, possibly written by Duchamp, states:

Whether Mr Mutt with his own hands made the fountain has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view - created a new thought for that object. (Anon 1917, cited by Howarth 2000, Anon's capitals).

Second, a Heideggerian reduction leads back to the painting's character as beingness, 'making more manifest the truth of beings' (Marion 2002a, p.45). An example which Heidegger uses is *A Pair of Shoes* (van Gogh 1886), where the painting, to a greater degree than direct observation or a description of the shoes, is 'the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, in truth *is*' (Heidegger 2002, p. 16, Heidegger's italics). Van Gogh painted many pairs of shoes, descriptions of which as objects would presumably include reference to leather uppers and soles, the stitching, laces, and nails on the soles. However, Heidegger says we have to take into account their use, which is apparent in the painting: 'The peasant woman wears her shoes in the field. Only then do they become what they are [...]' From out of the dark opening of the well-worn insides of the shoes the toil of the worker's tread stares forth' and so on with an eloquent evocation of the peasant's world (Heidegger 2002, pp. 13-14). What is potentially opened up for the viewer is the experience of being in a world from another time and culture, which takes us out of our own world (Lewis and Staehler 2010, pp. 103-104). More generally, this is a state of being in which phenomena show

themselves to us through *Stimmung*, usually translated as 'mood' though with the understanding that this implies connotations of 'attunement' rather than typical everyday use of the word (Ratcliffe 2013, pp. 157-158).

...only because the "senses" belong ontologically to a being whose kind of being is an attuned being-in-the-world can they be "touched" and "have a sense" for something so that what touches them shows itself in an affect. Something like an affect would never come about [...] if attuned being-in-the-world were not already related to having things in the world matter to it in a way prefigured by moods. *In attunement lies existentially a disclosive submission to world out of which things that matter to us can be encountered.* Indeed, we must *ontologically* in principle leave the primary discovery of the world to "mere mood."  
(Heidegger 2010 p. 134, Heidegger's italics).

Third, Marion considers what remains after the identifications as object and being have been reduced and asks himself the question about his imaginary painting 'what do I see when I see with phenomenological rigor?' His answer:

Not the framed canvas, nor the country objects, not even the organization of the colors and the forms - I see, without any hesitation, the ruddy and ochre flood of the day's last light as it inundates the entire scene. This luminosity itself does not strike me as a fact of color; rather, this fact of color strikes me only that it makes me undergo a passion [...] What more does the painting offer besides its real component parts? Its effect. But this effect is not produced in the mode of an object, nor is it constituted or reconstituted in the mode of beings. It gives itself. The painting [...] is reduced to its ultimate phenomenality insofar as it gives its effect. It appears as given in the effect that it gives. (Marion 2002a, pp. 51-52).

As acknowledged by Marion (2002a, p. 50), the above analysis has been informed by Kandinsky's views concerning the effects of colour on the soul:

...color is a means of exerting a direct influence upon the soul. Color is the keyboard. The eye is the hammer. The soul is the piano, with its many strings. The artist is the hand that purposefully sets the soul vibrating by means of this or that key. (Kandinsky 1994, p. 160)

And so, going beyond Husserl and Heidegger, Marion arrives at his own primary principle 'so much reduction, so much givenness' (Marion 1998, p. 203; Marion 2002a, p. 14), or in other words, 'the more reduction, the more givenness; as much reduction, as much givenness' (Horner 2005, p. 111). Marion is not abolishing the phenomenality of objectness and being, but

going further, seeing the painting reduced to the givenness of its effect. In so doing he is adding another strand to already-raised and recurring issues about how to judge or verify paintings. The imaginary painting of his reductions is 'ordinary, indeed mediocre' (Marion 2002a, p. 40) and from his description is representational and hence, presumably, not to be taken seriously by artists such as Malevich (Malevich 1964, p. 95, as quoted in Section 2.2). Yet its effect, through colour, is to touch his soul, to make him 'undergo a passion' (Marion 2002a, p. 51).

Resonating with Marion, the importance of achieving effect in a painting is mentioned repeatedly by the French Romantic Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) in his journal (e.g. Delacroix 1995, pp. 122, 179, 198, 235), and a general point that too much detail can be counter-productive is illustrated by what he says about seascapes:

As a rule, marine artists do not paint the sea well. One might apply the same criticism to them as to landscape painters. They try to display too much knowledge, they make portraits of waves, just as landscape painters do of trees, earth, mountains, etc. They are not sufficiently concerned with the *effect on the imagination*, which by the multiplicity of details - too minutely described even when they are true - is distracted from the main theme, the vastness or depth which the art is capable of expressing.  
(Delacroix 1995, p. 300, my italics).

Proceeding from Marion's reductions of an imaginary painting to observations concerning a real one, Cézanne, accompanied by Gasquet, visited the Louvre and stopped in front of Paolo Veronese's *The Wedding Feast at Cana* (Veronese 1563). This is a huge (70 m<sup>2</sup>) painting which took fifteen months to paint (Carminati 2012, pp. 5, 8-9), full of people and impressive architecture, combining the biblical account with a lavish Venetian banquet. Some of Cézanne's words as reported by Gasquet are strongly and beautifully reminiscent of Marion's analysis:

There's painting for you. Detail, ensemble, volumes, values, composition, excitement, it's all there [...] Shut your eyes, wait, don't think of anything. Now open them [...] One sees only a great coloured undulation, isn't that right? A rainbow effect, colours, a wealth of colours. That's the first thing a picture should give us, a harmonious warmth, an abyss into which the eye plunges, something dimly forming. A state of grace induced by colour. You can feel all these shades of colour running in your blood, don't you agree? You feel



reinvigorated. You are born into the true world. You become yourself, you become part of painting [...] To love a painting you need first to have drunk it in like this, in long draughts. You must lose consciousness. Go down with the painter to the dark, tangled roots of things and rise up again from them with the colours, open up with them in the light. Learn how to see. To feel... (Gasquet 1991, p. 180).

There is also my personal experience with *Vision of the Church*, Figure 2.5 (Baker 2002), observing or hearing reports of viewers seeing it for the first time. In many cases there is no apparent response, but the most telling reaction is silent attention occasionally accompanied by reflex actions such as short intakes of breath. This suggests that at least to some viewers the initial experience is one of givenness in the sense that Marion describes it, the painting reduced to giving an effect of light and colour which strikes people. Other reactions include questions about meaning, which it is

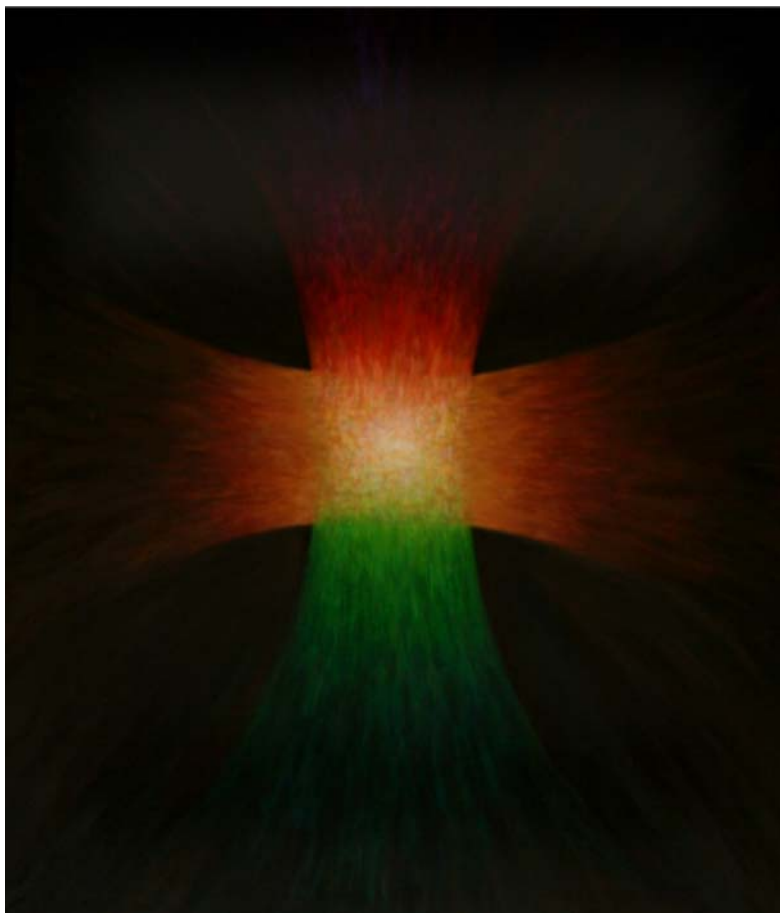


Figure 2.5.

*Vision of the Church*  
(Baker 2002).

Acrylic on fibreboard.

122 x 100 cm.

St John the Baptist  
Church Hall,  
Ruyton-XI-Towns,  
Shropshire.

possible to answer along the lines of the footnote.<sup>9</sup> However, this gives rise to a problem because even though the intellect may grasp the words, they do not and cannot answer the question adequately. Even shelf-loads of theological tomes cannot, for who can fully comprehend the Word, the Spirit and the mystery of God? Rather the painting is a symbol opening into a world of potentially endless meaning. Perhaps this lay behind one viewer's comment, that he was not interested in explanations of meaning, he just liked looking at the painting because it is beautiful.

The least reduced reactions, after Husserl, occur when the outward-reaching consciousness strives towards the picture as an object and the viewer asks questions about such things as the type of paint that was used or how long it took to produce. Some viewers may of course move from the initial impact of light and colour to curiosity about the painting processes. However, as the painter of *Vision of the Church*, I am aware that lying behind the possibility of viewers receiving givenness in terms of Marion's final reduction to effect, these processes included an originating different variety of givenness. In this case it was an idea and undeveloped mental image which had to be worked out through the paint with intentionality directed towards producing a particular effect, recognisable only when it had happened. In other words, the painter cannot be regarded as a simple channel through which givenness from a phenomenon flows to the viewer; the givenness of a phenomenon as experienced by the painter is not the same as the givenness of the painting of the phenomenon as experienced by the viewer. Moreover, if the original givenness to the painter is fully reduced it has to be

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<sup>9</sup> The darkness is meant to symbolise God's mystery, and the lightest area in the middle represents the church, the body of Christ. Emerging from left and right in earthy colours is the horizontal dimension of creation culminating in human beings, made from earth elements. The vertical dimension represents God's creativity through the eternal Word and the incarnate Word, shown by the green of new growth; and the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit is represented by the red of fire. The light of the church arises from our human reception and response to the Word and the Spirit. It should be noted that the painting is purposefully displayed without an adjacent title, but a small notice elsewhere in the room gives the title and a brief explanation of meaning.

'de-reduced' to pass into the painter's mind and be focused in a beam of conscious intentionality to produce a painting.

Heidegger seems to suggest that the painter *can* be seen as a simple channel, when he says:

in great art (which is all we are concerned with here) the artist remains inconsequential in comparison with the work - almost like a passageway which, in the creative process, destroys itself for the sake of the coming forth of the work. (Heidegger 2002, p. 19)

His comment does not, however, do justice to the role of the painter in interactive processes embracing givenness, intentionality, and the handling of materials. Certainly art can be appreciated without knowing the identity of the artist, but the experience that a painting takes on a life of its own both whilst it is being made and subsequently when it is a new thing in the world points to the artist as parent rather than an inconsequential passageway. Apart from this, Heidegger's restriction to 'great art' is problematic because he does not make clear what 'great' means in this context. However, what is raised is an addition to the recurring issues about judging and verifying art which will be brought together in Section 8.2.

Another way of thinking about reductions, which links with the scientific recognition of known unknowns and unknown unknowns mentioned in Section 1.3, is in terms of horizons of perception. Employing the three reductions distinguished by Marion, types of experiences can be differentiated as coming from different 'distances', limited by different horizons; though all types may be given during the course of painting a single picture. In the case of reduction to objectness, the horizon is the limit of directed consciousness. Husserl gave much thought to this, realising that perception of an object cannot be given from all sides at once, and he goes on to imagine the object as follows:

it calls out to us, as it were, in these referential implications: 'There is still more to see here, turn me so you can see all my sides, let your gaze run through me, draw closer to me, open me up, divide me up; keep on looking me over again and again...' (Husserl 2001, p. 41).

This engaging way of expressing it makes the phenomenological point that perception includes both the viewer's consciousness reaching out *and* the object drawing attention. For Husserl, the horizon of the object encompasses these 'inner' implications providing more aspects of the same object, and also any further related objects in the environs to give an 'outer' horizon (Lewis and Staehler 2010, pp. 24-25). Hence there are both known knowns and known unknowns included, the latter being knowable in principle:

In other words, everything that genuinely appears is an appearing thing only by virtue of being intertwined and permeated with an intentional empty horizon, that is, by virtue of being surrounded by a halo of emptiness with respect to appearance. It is an emptiness that is not a nothingness, but an emptiness to be filled-out; it is a *determinable indeterminacy*. For the intentional horizon cannot be filled out in just any manner; it is a horizon of consciousness that itself has the fundamental trait of consciousness as the consciousness of something. (Husserl 2001, p. 43, my italics).

However, Husserl's 'determinable indeterminacy' does not include unknown unknowns; we are only aware that these exist because the evidence of history is that completely unanticipated and surprising things sometimes irrupt into human experience. However, at least some of these unknown unknowns are still potentially within the grasp of directed consciousness, and once we become aware of them, they may spawn more known unknowns which may be investigated.

Beyond any such potential knowing is a different sort of world, more dimly lit, stretching to the primordial horizon of Heidegger's being-in-the world; 'the possibilities of disclosure belonging to cognition fall far short of the primordial disclosure of moods' (Heidegger 2010, p. 131). Ultimately, in the case of Marion's reduction to givenness beyond the horizon of being, phenomena give themselves from themselves alone, not involving constituting subjects. Marion proposes 'a phenomenon only shows *itself* to the extent that it first gives *itself*' (Marion 2002b, p. 30, Marion's italics), a phrase to which he often returns. Writing theologically, he asks 'Does God give himself to be known according to the horizon of Being or according to a more radical horizon?' He answers 'God gives Himself to be known insofar as He gives

Himself - according to the horizon of the gift itself. The gift constitutes at once the mode and body of his revelation' (Marion 2012, p. xxvi). In terms of *The Three Spirals*, Marion's above-mentioned 'horizon of the gift' may be related to the interface between God and the creation as discussed in Chapter 1, where the pure givenness which forms and sustains the universe including us is coming to us from out of the inherently unknowable.

*To the Edge*, Figure 2.6 (Baker 2007b) can be seen as illustrating phenomenological horizons, this being a train of thought which occurred after the event of the painting. The original idea was a symbolic landscape with the path representing the way of Christian discipleship. It is based on selected parts of the footpath over a local hill, the Cliffe, coming eventually to the edge of an old sandstone quarry with trees emerging from its depths. On the edge, three trees have been singled out, with the red berry-laden rowan being an evocation of the Crucifixion. Notwithstanding initial impressions, this tree is directly on the path whereas the other two trees are to each side. However, the red tree is ahead of the others and is about to go over the



Figure 2.6. *To the Edge* (Baker 2007b).

Acrylic on fibreboard. 50 x 100 cm.

St John the Baptist Church, Ruyton-XI-Towns, Shropshire.

edge, a boundary zone to be crossed, the boundary of death. In the distance over the Stiperstones ridge is the sunlit resurrection countryside of Easter. In a retrospective thought-experiment, not inconsistent with this symbolic meaning, I take a walk through phenomenological horizons, through the Husserlian and the Heideggerian to Marion's far horizon of reduction to pure givenness.

From the foreground to the sandstone edge my intentionality as directed consciousness is engaged and there are many phenomena meeting it, including the path and the vegetation it traverses. There are several different species of grass, heather, moss and so on, and I enjoy identifying them, matching pre-existing knowledge to the characteristics they are presenting to me. Then there is the edge itself with its trees, and the more distant view. I cannot see all of the path because of its ups and downs, nor into the quarry, nor yet the species of the trees, but these 'determinable indeterminacies' and numerous other 'referential implications' can be included within an overall Husserlian outer horizon. According to Husserl's principle of all principles, such a horizon together with 'the constituting I' (Marion 2002a, p. 218) are the essential presuppositions of anything being constituted as a phenomenon.

As the walk continues, I move beyond Husserl's horizon as I follow Marion's second Heideggerian reduction, involving 'a passive form of disclosure to phenomena which manifest *themselves*' (Lewis and Staehler 2010, p. 76, Lewis and Staehler's italics). The horizon is now beingness rather than objectness. I climb down over the edge and am immersed in quiet, dim, densely-wooded surroundings where the path is hardly discernable. The atmosphere is different, intentional thought is receding and I am experiencing mood not as a state of mind but in a pre-subjective and pre-objective way. It is mood which makes it possible for things to matter and according to Heidegger it is a pre-requisite for intentionality: '*Mood has always already disclosed being-in-the-world as a whole and first makes possible directing oneself toward something*' (Heidegger 2010, p. 133, Heidegger's italics). I experience fearfulness (Heidegger 2010, pp. 136-138),

‘a mood in which it is possible to encounter something as threatening and thus to be afraid’ (Ratcliffe 2013, p. 163), a mood which makes it possible for my consciousness to be directed to not getting lost; in times past it could have been looking out for dangerous wild animals. A concurrent experience is a mood which seems to incorporate two aspects, Heidegger’s curiosity and also his hope (Heidegger 2010, pp. 164-166, 329), though his lack of detailed discussions on diversity of moods is a problem here (Ratcliffe 2013, p. 171). It is a mood which makes it possible for my consciousness to be open and receptive towards newly-manifesting phenomena. In this particular thought-experiment, based on my real experiences when long distance walking in remote countryside, there appears to be a good correspondence between the above-mentioned primordial moods in the Heideggerian sense, and genetic predispositions of response to ‘hazard’ and ‘prospect’ according to Appleton’s theory as discussed in Chapter 1.

I emerge from the distant trees beyond the horizon of beingness, out onto the far ridge into the sunlight, surrounded by glowing patterns of colours and shapes in the expansive landscape below. I am quietly aware, meditative, feeling at home as a small speck in a wide world. My existence there is given by cosmic and biological processes far beyond my control; I am literally made of star-dust. Now, according to Marion, I am no longer a constituting subject but a constituted witness:

...the subject is still the worker of truth, but he cannot claim to be its producer. With the name *witness*, we must understand a subjectivity stripped of the characteristics that gave it transcendental rank [...] The I can no longer provide its meaning to lived experiences and intuition; rather the latter give themselves and therefore give it their meaning...  
(Marion 2002a, pp. 216-217, Marion’s italics).

As a thought experiment the phenomenological reductions have provided a route to the far horizon where phenomena give themselves from themselves alone and where, following Marion’s theological thinking, we encounter originary God-giveness and the possibility of revelation. However, whilst this is the horizon of pure givenness whether understood either phenomenologically or theologically, the givenness ripples out from it

through the Heideggerian and Husserlian horizons. Any of the three stages could be the starting point for a painting, or indeed that they could all contribute to a single painting.

## 2.5 Saturated phenomena

Saturated phenomena also give themselves from themselves alone, but in a distinctive way through an overflow of intuition. A starting point for this route to givenness is to recall briefly the concepts of intentionality and intuition, the former being understood as the energetic striving of the consciousness towards a phenomenon, and the latter as direct presence which is given to the subject, wholly or partially satisfying his or her intentionality. However, it is possible to go beyond this relationship in what Marion calls the paradox of saturation, the fundamental characteristic of which:

lies in the fact that intuition sets forth a surplus that the concept cannot organize, therefore that the intention cannot foresee. As a result, intuition is not bound to and by the intention, but is freed from it, establishing itself now as a free intuition [...] Far from coming after the concept and therefore following the thread of the intention (aim, foresight, repetition), intuition subverts, therefore precedes, every intention, which it exceeds and decenters. The visibility of the appearance thus arises against the flow of the intention - whence the paradox, the counter-appearance, the visibility running counter to the aim. (Marion 2002a, pp. 225-226).

Further, the givenness of saturated phenomena must be allowed 'to overflow with many meanings, or an infinity of meanings, each equally legitimate and rigorous, without managing either to unify them or to organize them' (Marion 2002b, p. 112).

The different types of saturated phenomenon identified by Marion are the event, the idol, the flesh and the icon. They are developed in this order in *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* (Marion 2002b), following the *a priori* categories of the human mind, quantity, quality, relation and modality, as discussed by Kant in his *Analytic of Concepts* first published in 1781 (Kant 1999, pp. 204-218). Whilst Marion's analysis sometimes includes



paintings it does not refer specifically to painting processes, however the fourfold typology has a universality which allows application in this area. It will be used in the following chapters as an essential pre-requisite for considering Marion's concepts of theistic revelation, which he associates with a combination of all four types, a 'paradox of paradoxes', saturated with intuition 'to the second degree' (Marion 2002a, p. 235). The four types are introduced below and will be returned to in this order in Chapter 8, together with discussion of any revelatory significance which has emerged in Chapters 3 to 7.

'The Event or the Happening Phenomenon', Chapter 2 in *In Excess*, addresses the category of *quantity*, with reference to phenomena which are unrepeatable, eliciting inexhaustible hermeneutics and unforeseeable in terms of detailed unfolding (Marion 2002b, p. 36). His primary example is a lecture hall in which an academic meeting is taking place, with the hall having an architectural history exceeding memory, filled with people each with their individual history, motivation, and degree of involvement and interaction in the proceedings (Marion 2002b, pp. 31-34). As will be argued in subsequent chapters, the subjects of some paintings may be seen as phenomena of the event type, with the time dimension being incorporated by painters in various ways. Moreover, painting processes themselves necessarily include the time dimension so can be understood as events in their own right.

'The Idol or the Radiance of the Painting', Chapter 3 in *In Excess*, corresponds to the Kantian category of *quality*, and a shift may be noted here in Marion's use of the word 'idol'. For example, in *The Idol and Distance*, first published in 1977, he writes 'The idol reflects back to us, in the face of a god, our own experience of the divine [...] The idol attempts to bring us close to the divine and to appropriate it to us' (Marion 2001, pp. 6-7). Marion's explanation at this stage is in line with Jenson:

Idolatry is our persistent and ingenious and even noble attempt to use deity for our own ends; in this attempt we necessarily posit a middle realm in which

to meet and negotiate with deity, and “idols” are whatever then emerges to conduct the negotiation. (Jenson 2001, p. 37).

These connotations are less obvious in Marion’s later *Being Given* (2002a, pp. 229-230) but there is still some continuity as summarised by Gschwandtner (2014a, p. 59) ‘the idol still is the first stopping point for the gaze and fills it completely with visibility’ and it does also ‘still function as a mirror by returning the gaze to itself.’ Yet there is now more room to manoeuvre, with the idol not limited to returning the gaze as is made clear with Marion’s example of a viewer in the face of a painting. This is discussed in *In Excess*, where he argues that paintings can dazzle, fascinate and amaze us and hold our admiring look, that they can never be closed objects ‘exhaustively seen’ but attract us to come and re-see them, for our looks are different on each occasion. Moreover, ‘the painting itself demands that the origins of the look are multiplied: mine but still those of all the other possible spectators’ (Marion 2002b, pp. 70-71). Such characteristics can be discerned, for example, in the collaborative paintings described and reproduced in Chapter 7. Can such paintings as ‘idols’ be linked with revelation? Yes, because as mentioned above, Marion thinks that all four types of saturated phenomena together are involved in revelation, and to such a combination, the idol contributes radiance, amazement, and the desire to look again and again.

‘Flesh or the Givenness of Self’, Chapter 4 in *In Excess*, deals with one’s own flesh, with Marion arguing that it is a saturated phenomenon with respect to the Kantian category of *relation*. In doing so he adds the ‘absolute’ (Marion 2002a, p. 316) to the three types of relationship already distinguished by Kant (1999, p. 212), namely ‘Of Inherence and Subsistence (*substantia et accidens*<sup>10</sup>), Of Causality and Dependence (cause and effect) and Of Community (reciprocity between agent and patient).’ Absolute

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<sup>10</sup> ‘In all alterations in the world the **substance** remains and only the **accidents** change’ (Kant 1999, p. 301, Kant’s emphasis). Substance may be understood as any individual enduring thing in itself, including human beings, and accidents as attributes which could belong to or inhere in the substance but not necessarily so, and which could change.

phenomena appear without having any relation to any other phenomena, and flesh is the primary example. This is demonstrated through Marion's analysis of personal suffering, pleasure and ageing (Marion 2002b, pp. 91-96), which shows that 'I can take neither leave nor distance from my flesh, because I do not have it, I am it' (Marion 2002b, p. 92); similarly the Australian Catholic philosopher Shane Mackinlay comments: 'Giving me to myself, my flesh is the first phenomenon in the world, and that by which the rest of the world is in turn rendered phenomenal for me' (Mackinlay 2010, p. 130). The reality of this is recognised in Chapter 6 with its consideration of diverse portraits, including suffering depicted in challenging portraits of war and disease-ravaged faces.

'The Icon or the Endless Hermeneutic', Chapter 5 in *In Excess*, corresponds to the Kantian category of *modality*, and here Marion comes closer to the theological domain. As expressed in *Being Given*:

The paradox here stems from the fact that the relation of knowledge (modality) is inverted. Far from being able to keep the phenomenon under my sight as my object, I receive its gaze, which faces me [...] Such a counter-gaze and facing require of my gaze that it bear the gaze of the Other. (Marion 2002a, p. 318).

In common usage the word 'icon' has come to bear many meanings, but in this context it is the experience of intersecting gazes which is crucial to understanding icons as saturated phenomena. In the liturgical sense they are 'theology in imagery [...] one of the aspects of divine revelation and of our communion with God' (Quenot 1992, p. 12); however, Marion's use of the word need not be interpreted in this way. His analysis in *In Excess* is not specifically about icons in the church context, but has much to say about faces more generally, about how a counter-gaze may rise up in the void of the other's pupils, and about how envisaging a face demands endless hermeneutics (Marion 2002b, pp. 116, 123). Questions about iconicity arise in Chapter 3, where the possibility of nature being experienced as an icon is addressed; Chapter 4 which looks at icons from biblical and church perspectives; and Chapter 6, which includes liturgical icons in its analysis of

portraits and which considers what if any fundamental characteristics differentiate liturgical icons from portraits.

## 2.6 Questioning Marion

Quotations at the beginning of Chapter 1 seem to express painters' experiences of saturated phenomena, as indicated by phrases such as 'The magnificence of this scene overwhelmed me;' 'I just stood trembling;' 'the superhuman power of color in its own right;' and 'suddenly appearance comes in with a vividness.' These experiences are full of freshness, seemingly with phenomena being accepted just as they are given, and are in accord with some of Marion's language about the reception of saturated phenomena, notably the following from *In Excess*:

I will risk saying that the given, unseen but received, is projected on *l'adonné* (or consciousness, if one prefers) as on a screen; all the power of this given comes from crashing down on this screen, provoking all at once a double visibility. (a) First, that of the given, of course, the impact of which (until then invisible) bursts, explodes and is broken up in its outlines, the first visibles [...]. (b) But the visibility risen from the given provokes at the same time the visibility of *l'adonné*. In effect, *l'adonné* does not see itself before receiving the impact of the given. (Marion 2002b, p. 50):

However, the impression given here is that *l'adonné*, the 'given over, or gifted one' (Marion 2002b, p. 43), who may also be thought of as the 'witness' (Marion 2002a, pp. 216-217; 2008, pp. 142-144), is passive, bringing nothing to the experience. Can artists as *les adonnés* really be like blank screens? Already the answer seems to be 'not necessarily', for four main reasons.

- First, whilst some artists report overwhelming experiences which do seem consistent with the 'screen' model, there are other autobiographical accounts which suggest alternative ways of receiving givenness, including interactivity with paint. Marion's 'screen' model is not wholly consistent with the 'painting trajectories'

classification (Section 2.2) which is based on painters' real experiences.

- Second, some artists, having embryonic ideas, inner seeing, or having started a painting from a given, speak of deliberately trying to find something else to help them on their way. Quotations such as those from Emily Carr (Section 1.5) and Karl Weschke (Section 2.2) point to the active role of the painter and also raise questions about the relationships between searching, finding and givenness, questions which are not addressed by Marion.
- Third, Marion himself has already in effect proposed another route to pure givenness, namely the phenomenological reductions exemplified by my thought experiment walking through the painting *To the Edge*. Here, the givennesses of phenomena are received not because they crash through intentionality but because intentionality is quietened down by the reduction process. Marion does not seem to clarify the relationship between these two routes.
- Fourth, there must be doubts about whether anyone including artists can be separated from deeply embedded personal histories or characteristics such as psychological types. An example from Chapter 1 is Edvard Munch's reception of a blood-red sunset, which at first glance does seem to conform to Marion's description above of being struck by a saturated phenomenon. However, such an interpretation may need to be modified when, as mentioned in Section 1.5, we learn that Munch had a psychological disorder manifesting as severe anxiety, which he consciously attempted to express in his paintings (Hughes 1991, p. 281; Prideaux 2005, p.169). Another example refers to Chris Ofili's *Iscaiot Blues* as described in Section 2.2, with Ofili reflecting on the role of Judas Iscariot during the painting process. This input to the painting surely cannot be separated from Ofili's experience of being an altar boy and repeatedly hearing Bible stories

during his childhood, indeed he says that they still have relevance to his life (Nesbitt 2010, pp. 99-100).

These fundamental questions about how the givennesses of phenomena are received vis-à-vis the role of the artist will be borne in mind throughout Chapters 3 to 7, with the progression in each chapter being from painters' autobiographical material through phenomenological analysis to theological interpretation. Phenomenological analysis will include consideration of Marion's typology for saturated phenomena, however at the same time painters' experiences will in effect be used to critique Marion's arguments. Whenever possible, theological interpretation will incorporate ways in which the painters themselves have interpreted the relationships between their work and God. Overall, the findings will be summarised in Chapter 8, where Marion's understanding of revelation as 'a variation of saturation' (Marion 2002a, p. 235) will be assessed and expanded.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE FIRST SPIRAL: GIVENS FROM NATURE

#### 3.1 Nature and saturated phenomena

This chapter looks at some ways in which painters have worked from the world of nature, World 1, with particular reference to mountain landscapes from Cézanne's Mont Sainte-Victoire to diverse painters of the English Lake District. Such a focus maximises depth of exploration of the relationships between painters' experiences and Marion's saturated phenomena.

Evidence presented in this chapter indicates that painters may indeed experience natural phenomena as saturated, though this is not inevitable. Cultural mediations may intervene, reducing openness to the extent that natural phenomena are 'common' to that painter rather than saturated. Theologically, diverse interpretations including Catholic sacramentality and Orthodox iconicity include the possibility of theistic revelation through nature.

#### 3.2 Cézanne and Mont Sainte-Victoire

Starting with one painter and one phenomenon in World 1, it would be difficult to surpass the relationship between Cézanne and Mont Sainte-Victoire, which dominates his native Aix-en-Provence. The 1011 metre limestone peak rises above the Arc valley and, together with the surrounding countryside, was the subject of at least thirty oil paintings and a comparable number of water-colours (Kendall 2004, p. 20). A comment in a letter to his childhood friend Émile Zola provides an example of how the mountain struck him: 'As the train passes near Alexis's place in the country, a stunning *motif* opens up on the eastern side: Sainte-Victoire and the cliffs overlooking Beaurecueil' (Cézanne 1878, cited by Danchev 2013, p. 171). In this context, a motif presents a 'naturally concentrated composition' which offers 'a kind of invitation to paint' (Machotka 2014, pp. 9-10).

According to Cézanne's biographer Gasquet, it was in 1879 that 'the massive planes' of Mont Sainte-Victoire began to dominate Cézanne's consciousness;

He contemplated them, he seemed to see them for the first time, he brought to bear on them his thoughts and his art, his experience, his will. He fell in love with the structure of the earth. He read its geological message. He dissected the landscape [...]

and nearly 20 years later he was still engrossed:

The mountain, sometimes massive and overwhelming, sometimes fluid and crystalline, gilded by the setting sun, dominated everything. Cézanne doted on it more than ever [...] He painted every aspect of it.  
(Gasquet 1991, pp. 95, 118).

Cézanne's geological interests as recorded by Gasquet (1991, p. 165) '...I need to know some geology - how Sainte-Victoire's roots work, the colours of the geological soils - since such things move me and benefit me', would no doubt have been enhanced through his friendship with Antoine-Fortuné Marion, a local geologist and director of Marseille's Museum of Natural History, who frequently accompanied Cézanne on painting expeditions (Athanassoglou-Kallmyer 2003, pp. 155-157).

According to Gasquet (1991, p. 95), Cézanne worked 'to the point of ecstasy or anguish', nevertheless, he repeatedly expressed his feelings of inadequacy in the face of nature. For example, at the age of 40 he wrote 'I'm still trying to find my way, pictorially. Nature presents me with the greatest problems' (Cézanne 1879, cited by Danchev 2013, p. 198); and at the age of 67, sitting on the bank of the Arc only six weeks before his death, he was still not achieving what he wished to express in painting. However, in this important letter to his son, there is a profound sense of the painter experiencing the overflowing abundance of nature:

I'm becoming more clear-sighted in front of nature, but the *réalisation* of my *sensations* is still very laboured. I can't achieve the intensity that builds in my senses, I don't have that magnificent richness of colour that enlivens nature. Here on the riverbank the *motifs* multiply, the same subject from a different angle provides a fascinating subject for study, and so varied that I think I



could occupy myself for months without moving, leaning now more to the right, now more to the left.

(Cézanne 1906, Cézanne's italics. Cited by Danchev 2013, pp. 370-371).

In order to explore Cézanne's relationship with nature, four paintings or groups of paintings of Mont Sainte-Victoire, from different vantage points and different periods of his life, will now be looked at more closely. The earliest, one of Cézanne's first depictions of the subject, is *Trench with Mont Sainte-Victoire*, also known as *The Railway Cutting* (Cézanne 1870). At this stage Cézanne is emerging from youthful classical compositions (Boime 1998, p. 557) to the observation and *en plein air* painting of Provençal landscapes.

The primary format of *Trench with Mont Sainte-Victoire* is horizontal, with the bottom third comprising flat rather featureless brown and yellow-brown fields, and the top third being blue sky. In the middle are the oranges, ochres and greens of a hill with patches of trees, bisected by the cutting and its dark shaded face which dominates the central part of the painting. Behind this hill is Mont Sainte-Victoire itself, painted in light and dark shades of bluish grey, with broad generally downward-sweeping brush strokes, and a shallow V at the bottom suggesting the basal strata. Unlike later paintings, these features are not built up with distinct patches of paint; that is, Cézanne's work is not yet showing the influence of impressionism (Merleau-Ponty 1993, p. 61).

An earlier version of *The Trench* (Cézanne 1867-1868) side by side with John Rewald's site photograph c. 1935, is given in Machotka (2014, p. 65). It lacks foreground fields and Mont Sainte-Victoire, and the cutting is not shadowed and could be interpreted as a natural depression. Machotka (2014, p. 60) observes that the colours differ from those used in later Aix landscapes in only one respect, a 'coral-orange' is used instead of the more common brown-tinted yellow known as Naples yellow. Machotka confirms that the coral-orange is close to the local soil colour revealed by the cutting, albeit 'overstated'. In the later version there can be no doubt that the cutting is of recent human origin, with the effect that the diagonal leading up to Mont Sainte-Victoire is emphatically broken. 'The spectator is literally cut off from

the visual ascent to the sacred site of Provençale mythology' (Boime 1998, p. 556). The painting has been interpreted as disclosing Cézanne's sense of alienation, a refusal to accept 'the modernization of the local landscape as an instrument of economic progress' (Boime 1998, p. 557); and this interpretation is consistent with Gasquet's record of Cézanne saying 'Our lives are at the mercy of the Borough Surveyors. Engineers ruin everything' (Gasquet 1991, p. 39).

Like a number of other paintings from the 1880's, *Mont Sainte-Victoire with Large Pine* (Cézanne c. 1887), looks towards the mountain over the Arc valley with its viaduct, and is framed by pine trees. The fields, trees and buildings between the pines and the mountain are painted in blocks of colour mainly yellows and greens; and the fields, pine trunk and branches are outlined in dark blue. Cézanne is clearly interested in the relationship between the pines and the mountain (Machotka 2014, p. 116), with the downward curve of the horizon to the right of the peak being reflected in the curve of a pine branch. More subtly, the branches reflect blocks of pale colours arranged in shallow Vs on the lower part of the mountain, depicting the formations of the limestone strata. These strata are discussed again in the following section on the Bibemus Quarry painting.

Gasquet records a conversation with Cézanne, both of them sitting under a pine tree looking out over the Arc valley to Mont Sainte-Victoire, and with Cézanne painting. He was dissatisfied and asked Gasquet what scent the canvas gave off, to which Gasquet replied 'The odour of pine trees.'

Cézanne's response was:

You say that because of the two large pines whose branches are counterbalancing one another in the foreground [...] But that's a visual sensation [...] Besides, the pure blue smell of pine, which is sharp in the sun, ought to blend with the fresh green smell of meadows in the morning, and with the smell of stones and the distant marble smell of Saint-Victoire. I have not achieved that effect. It must be achieved, and achieved through the colours... (Cited by Gasquet 1991, pp. 147, 151)

Boime (1998, p. 563) points to this as part of the evidence of Cézanne's desire to 'synthesize his various sensory perceptions in the place where he stood', and his 1906 letter to his son Paul, as quoted above, also reflects such a desire.

It was on this occasion that Cézanne also spoke about painting Mont Sainte-Victoire, and his words demonstrate the tenacity, intensity and visual associations in his observations:

Look at Sainte-Victoire there. How it soars, how imperiously it thirsts for the sun! And how melancholy it is in the evening when all its weight sinks back [...] Those blocks were made of fire and there's still fire in them. During the day shadows seem to creep back with a shiver, as if afraid of them. High up there is Plato's cave: when large clouds pass overhead, notice how the shadow falling from them quivers on the rock as if it were being burnt up, instantly consumed by a fiery mouth. For a long time I was quite unable to paint Sainte-Victoire; I had no idea how to go about it because, like others who just look at it, I imagined the shadow to be concave; whereas in fact it's convex, it disperses outward from the centre.

(Cited by Gasquet 1991, p. 153).

*Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from the Bibemus Quarry* (c. 1897) is a particularly colourful painting with a foreground of glowing oranges and yellows of quarry cliffs and deep and light greens of trees. The motif has been analysed both by Loran (2006, pp. 60-65), and Machotka (2014, pp. 164-168) on the basis of their visits to Cézanne's original vantage point; and Loran (2006, p. 63) confirms that whilst the quarry rock colours could be interpreted as evidence of imagination, they have in fact been faithfully recorded. In another respect, however, Machotka (2014, p. 164) suggests that in reality the greens of the trees were browner than in the painting, too close to the quarry rock colours, and that Cézanne therefore chose more emerald hues to balance the colour composition.

In the painting the mountain rises impressively in the background as a pale mass which on closer examination is seen to include many colours such as delicate pinks, blues and violets. Each typically rectangular colour patch remains 'as a distinct plane' (Loran 2006, p. 64), and the planes build up into the repeated shallow Vs of the mountain's strata. According to Machotka

(2014, p. 164), these strata can be seen on the mountainside from anywhere near Aix; he suggests that they may have been ignored by Cézanne in some other contexts but here 'form part of the rich integration of the painting'. In particular the Vs 'nestle into, and mirror' the gap in the quarry rocks of the foreground.

*Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from Les Lauves* is a series painted during the last four years of Cézanne's life from the terraced slope known as Les Lauves, above Cézanne's last studio. Loran (2006, pp. 104-105) and Machotka (2014, pp. 199, 203) reproduce separate versions both in the Philadelphia Museum of Art (respectively Cézanne 1902-1906a, Cézanne 1902-1906b); however these two paintings are very similar, with an extensive pattern of sunny yellow and green in front of the grey-blue mountain. They might be considered 'highly abstract' (Loran 2006, p. 104), however the inclusion by both authors of Rewald's photograph of the motif (c. 1935) shows how the patches of colour in the paintings relate to the landscape, with an underlying linear construction and with identifiable fields, trees and buildings.

Machotka contrasts a Philadelphia painting with a version (Cézanne 1904-1906a) in the Zurich Kunsthaus:

They are equally passionate in their portrayal of the site, yet quite different in style. Their styles reveal, I think, as sensitive a response to what the site invites the painter to do as to what it restrains him from doing. In the first (in Zurich), the day is obviously overcast and the season is late, autumnal; in the second (in Philadelphia), the day is crisply sunny and the season sometime early in the summer. (Machotka 2014, p. 195).

Loran refers to the 'all-over patchwork of color planes' in the series (Loran 2006, p. 104). This includes patches in the sky which, for the Philadelphia painting according to Machotka (2014, p. 196) were neither required nor suggested by the site but are 'a private symbolic response.' In similar vein Morris (1998, pp. 815-816) asks the question 'What name is there for this so-called sky that transmutes with so little transition into this so-called mountain?'; and refers to the oils which 'pulsate with half a dozen hues of

blues, greens and purples [...] erupting upward to invade the space of a nominal sky, which in turn descends with touches of ultramarine.'

*Les Lauves* series includes both oils and watercolours, which provides an opportunity for both Morris and Machotka to comment on the importance of the medium in the painting process. Morris (1998, p. 816) describes the transparent purples and greens and pinks of the watercolours as shimmering and floating. Machotka (2014, pp. 196, 200-203) compares watercolour and oil paintings of the same view, with the same trees, houses, path and of course Mont Sainte-Victoire, and concludes that in watercolour Cézanne 'pushed the balance between observation and the logic of patches one further degree towards abstraction.'

There is ample evidence from the above that Mont Saint-Victoire and its environs gave virtually inexhaustible sensory experiences to Cézanne. His intentionality was repeatedly directed towards the mountain, and was more than filled by what was given. The letter to his son Paul quoted above is of particular significance in showing how Cézanne was open to the profound richness of nature; and the evidence of his paintings is that time and time again he used what he observed, for example the seasonal and daily variations of light, the behaviour of shadows, the shapes of pine tree branches, structures such as the basal limestone strata, the yellow and green patterns of fields, and the colours of rocks and soils. But the painter is far from being a passive recipient of what is given, and in Cézanne's case this is evident in a number of ways. He was alert and selective concerning the naturally occurring structure of motifs, and further structured his paintings in various ways, for example the resonance of the pine branches with the mountain in *Mont Sainte-Victoire with Large Pine*, and the mountain's basal strata with quarry features in *Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from the Bibemus Quarry*. The latter painting also tells us that he used the colours given by nature but not invariably, sometimes making changes to enhance colour balance.

Machotka (2014, p. 10) refers to Cézanne's 'equal commitment to intense gazing and to coherent yet sensuous constructing'; certainly he theorised about composition, with probably his best known ideas being expressed both in a conversation with Gasquet (Gasquet 1991, 163) and a letter to his admirer the young artist Émile Bernard as follows:

Allow me to repeat what I told you here: to treat nature in terms of the cylinder, the sphere and the cone, everything put in perspective, so that each side of an object, of a plane, leads to a central point. Lines parallel to the horizon give breadth [...] Lines perpendicular to the horizon give depth. Now, we men experience nature more in terms of depth than surface, whence the need to introduce into our vibrations of light, represented by reds and yellows, a sufficient quantity of blue tones, to give a sense of atmosphere. (Cézanne 1904, cited by Danchev 2013, p. 334).

Cézanne's composition was analysed in great technical detail by Loran (2006), based on his field observations of Cézanne's sites in the 1920s, and using diagrams and photographs. However, Loran emphasised that his analyses cannot verifiably be correlated with how Cézanne actually worked; indeed, he came to the conclusion that notwithstanding Cézanne's theorising as exemplified above, he actually painted 'by feeling and intuition' (Loran 2006, pp. xxi, 77).

It is possible to identify some of the feelings which Cézanne brought to his paintings, about industrialisation of his native landscape evidenced in *Trench with Mont Sainte-Victoire*, and about the rich historical, cultural and religious significance of the mountain (Boime 1998, pp. 564-565; Athanassoglou-Kallmyer 2003, pp. 152-153), which Cézanne loved recalling (Gasquet 1991, p. 34). There were also strong childhood memories and 'deep nostalgia' associated with particular sites around Aix (Morris 1998, pp. 817-818), exemplified by a pine tree 'Do you remember the pine that stood on the bank of the Arc, lowering its leafy head over the chasm that opened at its feet' (Cézanne 1858 in a letter to Émile Zola, cited by Danchev 2013, p. 47).

The above analysis suggests that for Cézanne, nature in general, and Mont Sainte-Victoire in particular, were saturated phenomena. Yet in his

expression of these phenomena through paintings, there is clearly interaction between what is purely given and what Cézanne brings to it. These conclusions invite exploration of two issues *vis-à-vis* Marion's writings on saturated phenomena; the first is Marion's neglect of the world of nature, and the second is the hermeneutical role of the painter. These are discussed in Section 3.4.

### 3.3 The English Lake District

The mountainous theme continues in this consideration of the Lake District, which encompasses several painters. Until the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, wild scenery in Britain had not generally been seen as a suitable subject for artists; however, by the time Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* was first published in 1757 (Burke 2015), there was a growing appreciation of mountain landscapes and the emotions associated with them. The Lake District was a particular inspiration, with early visiting artists including Thomas Gainsborough in 1783, Joseph Mallord William Turner in 1797, and John Constable in 1806. Powell (2010b, pp. 141-172) catalogues these and other artists, a total of 45, for the period 1750-1820. It is possible to discern a diversity of approaches with reference to the relatively sparse autobiographical material together with biographical notes and the evidence of the paintings themselves.

The visit made by the 30-year old John Constable, still struggling for recognition (Powell and Hebron 2010, p. 106), and sharpening 'his discriminatory power' (Shields 2006, p. 16), was briefly recorded by his friend and biographer C.R. Leslie in *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable*, first published in 1843: 'He spent about two months among the English lakes and mountains, where he made a great number of sketches, of a large size, on tinted paper, sometimes in black and white, but more often coloured' (Leslie 1980, p. 18). These sketches convey a very different impression from Constable's more familiar lowland landscape paintings:

The artist seems resolutely to have opened his heart, mind and eyes to the novel and, in his terms, the strange [...] The emotional thrust of these works is remarkable. They are altogether lacking in charm: the wish to please, which in the opening chapter of Constable's career was a carefully cultivated aspect of his art, is conspicuous by its absence. Instead of invitations to the enjoyment of rusticity or prompts to gentle meditation the spectator is faced by nature in the raw, nature unfriendly if not quite alien, windswept and rain-drenched. (Shields 2006, pp. 20-21).

Several of the sketches have notes about weather conditions written on the back in pencil, for example:

21 September:	evening - stormy with slight rain
22 September:	very stormy afternoon
27 September:	twilight after much rain
2 October:	morning previous to a fine day twilight after a very fine day
4 October:	Noon Clouds breaking away after rain

(Cited by Thornes 1999, p. 99, and Hebron *et al* 2006, p. 101).

Thornes (1999, p. 100) suggests that this early experience in the Lake District was 'very important in the development of Constable's skies'; which progressed to his meteorologically informed cloud studies of the early 1820's and the skylscapes of well-known works such as *The Hay Wain* (Constable 1821) and *Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Grounds* (Constable 1823). Such evidence of application to recording the truths of nature reflects some words of Constable written four years earlier in a letter to his Suffolk friend and sketching companion John Dunthorne:

I am come to a determination to make no idle visits this summer [...] I shall return to Bergholt, where I shall endeavour to get a pure and unaffected manner of representing the scenes that may employ me [...] *There is room enough for the natural painter*<sup>11</sup>. The great vice of the present day is *bravura*, an attempt to do something beyond the truth.  
(Constable 1802, letter cited by Leslie 1980, p. 15, Leslie's italics).

However, the following Lake District inscriptions show that Constable had not completely stopped characterising visual experience in terms of other painters:

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<sup>11</sup> The word used by Constable was 'painture', in the sense of 'style in painting' (footnote in Leslie 1980, p. 15).



*View in Borrowdale* 25 September 1806: fine cloudy day tone very mellow like - the mildest of / Gaspard Poussin and Sir GB<sup>12</sup> & on the whole deeper toned than this drawing.

(Cited by Evans 2014, pp. 26, 37; Hebron *et al* 2006, p. 109).

*View in Borrowdale* 4 October 1806: dark Autumnal day at noon-tone [...] the effect exceeding terrific and much like the beautiful Gaspard I saw in Margaret St. (Cited by Evans 2014, p. 26; V & A 2015a).

Whilst Constable subsequently produced a number of Lake District oil paintings for exhibition (Leslie 1980, p. 19) no remaining ones have so far been identified. Shields (2006, p. 23) suggests that they were destroyed by the artist because they were not commercial, and the canvas reused: several later oil sketches are on 'dismembered larger canvases.' Shields also quotes the landscape painter and diarist Joseph Farington<sup>13</sup>, who advised Constable against exhibiting a five feet wide painting of Borrowdale because it did not have enough colour and variety. Shields suggests that Constable 'probably carried over into an oil painting much of the character of the wash drawings and watercolours', in other words he was not attempting to go 'beyond the truth' and so failed to please the taste of the time.

A few years before Constable's visit, Turner had visited the Lake District and likewise made numerous pencil and watercolour sketches; however in working some of these up into 'finished' paintings he clearly incorporated additional features. A dramatic example is *Buttermere Lake, with part of Cromackwater, Cumberland, a Shower* (Turner 1798). This was first exhibited in 1798 with the following verses, which are a conflation from James Thomson's *Spring*:

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<sup>12</sup> Gaspard Poussin, also known as Gaspard Dughet, was a 17<sup>th</sup> century Franco-Italian landscape painter (Britannica 2015). Sir GB refers to Sir George Beaumont, a 'leading arbiter of taste' and landscape painter (National Gallery 2015) and mentor of John Constable (Hebron 2006, pp. 25-40).

<sup>13</sup> Diary of Joseph Farington, Volume ix; pp 3431-2, 3 April 1809, cited by Hebron *et al* (2006, p. 23).

Till in the western sky the downward sun  
 Looks out effulgent - the rapid radiance instantaneous strikes  
 Th'illumin'd mountains - in a yellow mist  
 Bestriding earth - The grand ethereal bow  
 Shoots up immense, and every hue unfolds.

Vide Thompson's [sic] Seasons

(Cited by Butlin and Joll 1984, p. 5).

The basis of this painting was a pencil sketch made during rainy conditions, and it is speculated that Turner worked it up in watercolour when he had returned to his Keswick lodgings (Wilton 2010). The oil painting differs from the watercolour in several respects. There is a greater contrast between light and dark, with some of the lake surface and hillsides being quite black. The rainbow is more prominent, and its reflection in the lake has been added. In the foreground there are some dark branches framing the painting on the left hand side, and a rowing boat with two passengers on the lake (Butlin and Joll 1984, p. 5). Butlin and Joll suggest that Turner had Thomson's verses in mind from the outset and was 'probably also influenced by William Gilpin's *Observations Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty [...] Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland*, 1786, which quotes the same lines.' Further, it has been suggested that Turner was making a consciously 'sublime' statement (Tate 2010).

Another of Turner's 'finished' paintings is Ullswater, Cumberland (Turner c. 1835), a watercolour based on sketches made in 1797. This too has foreground features - two boats with boatmen on the lake, cattle standing in shallow water, and rocks on the shore with three people sitting on them. Topographically the mountains in the background are not very accurate, and the scene as a whole is 'suffused with the glowing light and colour imbibed on trips to Italy and Switzerland' (Art Fund 2005). Powell (2010a, p. 19) describes it as building on the topographical tradition but as being 'infused with the sublime qualities of vastness, magnificence and astonishment.'

From Gainsborough's Lake District tour 'a handful' of surviving drawings including *The Langdale Pikes* are mentioned by Powell and Hebron (2010, pp. 59-60). Gainsborough's purpose is known from a letter written in 1783:

'I'm going along with a Suffolk Friend to visit the Lakes in Cumberland & Westmorland [...] I purpose to mount all the Lakes at the next Exhibition in the great Stile' (Gainsborough 1783, cited by Hayes 2001, p. 153). The 'great Stile' for Gainsborough was 'the broad, intellectual and imaginative approach of the Old Masters - Claude, Nicolas Poussin, Gaspard Dughet and especially Rubens - as opposed to the particularities of place displayed by many contemporaries' (Powell 2010b, p. 151). In the end this exhibition did not take place because of a row between Gainsborough and the Royal Academy's Hanging Committee, however on returning from his tour he produced *Mountain Landscape with Shepherd* (Gainsborough 1783) apparently based on *The Langdale Pikes* but greatly transformed (Powell and Hebron 2010, p. 61). *Mountain Landscape with Bridge* (Gainsborough c. 1783-1784) was painted around the same time and shows a mountainous landscape which has not, however, been linked with any specific Lake District location.

Gainsborough's aims did not include topographical accuracy; rather his concern was a 'sweeping lateral rhythm comparable to Rubens' and a 'flowing movement' (Hayes 1980, p. 152). Indeed, according to Sir Joshua Reynolds writing in 1797, in pursuit of the ideal Gainsborough 'even framed a kind of model of landskips, on his table; composed of broken stones, dried herbs, and pieces of looking glass, which he magnified and improved into rocks, trees and water' (Reynolds 1975, p. 250). He also included figures for effect; the two paintings mentioned above together with the drawing of *The Langdale Pikes* all have figures in the foreground: a shepherd with sheep, people on a bridge, and a boatman with boat respectively. Gainsborough had earlier referred to such figures 'as a little business for the Eye to be drawn <from> the Trees in order to return to them with more glee' (Gainsborough 1767, cited by Hayes 2001, pp. 40-41).

These three artists between them exemplify three different ways in which the givens of nature come to be expressed in paintings. Constable, it seems, tried to record in his sketches the natural truth of a previously unfamiliar landscape. Turner and Gainsborough, whilst starting with nature, go beyond

it albeit in different directions; with Turner emphasising dramatic and sublime effects and Gainsborough pursuing idealised views of the beautiful. It has also become clear that the influence of other artists cannot be removed from any consideration of how the givens of nature come to be expressed. Both Gainsborough and Constable admired European landscape painters such as Gaspard Dughet; and Constable was influenced by Gainsborough, though Shields (2006, p. 19) raises the question of whether he consciously realised 'that the imposition of another painter's view of the countryside, even the view of Gainsborough, whom he admired just this side of idolatry, was increasingly inappropriate to the area in which he was currently operating.' The evidence of Constable's Lake District sketches is that in them he certainly moved well away from any style resembling Gainsborough's, and if this was a conscious decision it nevertheless reflects an influence, albeit a negative one. Turner was influenced by Claude Lorrain to the extent that he was sometimes called 'the British Claude', and by the Welsh landscape painter Richard Wilson (Warrell 2012, pp. 26-28).

All such influences, i.e. influences of other artists from whatever period in history, are examples of what may be called cultural mediation between what nature gives and what the painter actually expresses in the painting. Such mediation may not be constant throughout a painter's career, as is suggested by Constable's Lake District sketches and their departure from his previous style. Another variety of mediation, also cultural, may be through philosophical and aesthetic theories espoused by the painter; Constable owned a copy of Burke and 'knowledge of it is implicit' in many of Turner's paintings (Powell 2010a, p. 3). Indeed it is likely that all artists of this period, in the wake of Burke and Gilpin, would have been familiar with concepts of the beautiful, the picturesque, and the sublime. In a nutshell, 'beautiful' describes 'a serene, calm landscape consisting of idealised natural forms arranged in a balanced composition.' 'Picturesque' qualities are found 'in rough, craggy trees and foliage, sharp contrasts of light and shadow, and rustic anecdotes.' 'Sublime' landscapes typically depict 'tremendous mountains, deep valleys, and cataclysmic storms [...] terror and wonder engendered the emotional bases of a sublime aesthetic response to

wild nature' (Ketner and Tammenga 1984, p. 10). Of these approaches, pursuit of the picturesque became a popular cult fuelled by Gilpin's writings, which included a poem on landscape painting and an essay on landscape sketching. For example, he advises:

In *adorning your sketch*, a figure or two may be introduced with propriety. By figures I mean moving objects, as waggons, and boats, as well as cattle, and men [...] Their chief use is, to mark a road - to break a piece of foreground - to point out the horizon in a sea-view - or to carry off the distance of retiring water by the contrast of a dark sail, not quite so distant, placed before it.  
(Gilpin 1794, p. 77, Gilpin's italics).

Gilpin was the inspiration for a comic character called Dr Syntax (Powell 2010a, p. 16) and hence some delightful aquatints by the artist and caricaturist Thomas Rowlandson. He never visited the Lake District but published scenes which formed the basis of William Combe's poem *The Tour of Dr Syntax in Search of the Picturesque*. Dr Syntax is a poor schoolmaster who journeys to the Lakes with his horse Grizzle, with financial motives:

*I'll make a TOUR, - and then I'll WRITE it.*  
You well know what my pen can do,  
I'll prove it with my pencil too:-  
I'll ride and *write*, and *sketch* and *print*,  
And thus create a real mint;  
I'll *prose* it here, I'll *verse* it there,  
And *picturesque* it every where.  
Opening canto of *The Tour of Dr Syntax*.  
(Combe 1817, Combe's italics, cited by Powell and Hebron 2010, p. 109).

This popular work, published in instalments over two years in *Poetical Magazine*, was a 'light-hearted satire on picturesque touring.' *Doctor Syntax Sketching the Lake* (Rowlandson 1817) has Dr Syntax sitting on Grizzle with his sketchbook, with a fisherman looking on in bewilderment and a boat carrying fashionable tourists out on the lake (Powell and Hebron 2010, pp. 108-109).

Cultural tourists had been visiting the Lake District in growing numbers from the late 1700's onwards, many with sketchbooks and paint-boxes in hand. The first guidebook was published by Thomas West in 1778 and was

immensely popular, running to more than twelve editions by the 1830's (Powell and Hebron 2010, p. 56). It is full of recommendations about 'viewing stations' and what to look at, and West clearly had artists in mind, for example:

CONISTON [...] STATION III. After crossing the common, where grows a picturesque yew tree on the right hand, and a small peninsula rushes into the lake on the left, crowned with a single tree, enter the grove and pass a gate and bridge that crosses a small rivulet. Look for a fragment of dark coloured rock on the margin of the water, and near it will be found the best stand for the artist to take the finest view of the lake. Looking across the lake [...] a cataract will meet the eye, issuing from the bosom of the mountains. (West 1789, pp. 50-51)

West (1789, pp. 12-13) also recommended the use of the 'landscape mirror', in other words, the Claude glass, named after Claude Lorrain. The glass is a convex tinted mirror in which a spacious landscape could be reflected in a 'neat view' with the required 'mellow tinge', emulating Claude's style (V & A 2015b). Using it requires the artist to have his or her back to the real view! In similar vein, Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote about tourists gazing at aquatints rather than the landscape itself (Hebron 2010, p. 31). When painters are following the instructions and interpretations of others, or are not actually looking at the real landscape, the question has to be raised 'How open are they to the givenness of nature?', and this is discussed phenomenologically in Section 3.4.

Moving on to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Renouf (2004, pp. viii-xi) lists 211 artists associated with the Lake Artists Society. Among these, three generations of the Heaton Cooper family, Alfred, William and Julian, offer a bridge between the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the present. Alfred Heaton Cooper (1863-1929) was an heir of the older tradition, influenced by both Turner and Constable. He came to live in the Lake District in 1898, and notwithstanding his necessity to sell paintings to tourists to make a living, pursued his own vision. He made paintings 'of whatever struck him as fresh or interesting, visiting the high wild places, evoking the mountains and lakes through washes of colour with an apparently infinite number of tiny brush strokes applied over the wash' (Cowton 2012, p. 5).

William Heaton Cooper (1903-1995) accompanied his father on painting expeditions from an early age and eventually developed his own more pared-down way of painting the same landscapes. He was also a climber, and drew austere beautiful rock faces showing climbing routes, illustrating guides published by the Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District (e.g. Beetham 1953). This no doubt contributed to his 'keen sense' of the underlying geology (Cowton 2012, p. 5); as did the influence of Cézanne. This is made clear in William's autobiography *Mountain Painter*, where he says that only Cézanne among the moderns 'was able to express the rhythmic interrelationship of solid forms' and that Cézanne's 'many studies of Mont Sainte-Victoire under different conditions fascinated me and I vowed to see my native mountains as he did' (Heaton Cooper 1984, pp. 27-28). William went on to paint eleven views of the Langdale Pikes from the ridge of Lingmoor, in different seasons, weather conditions and times of day. He also refers to a view encompassing several mountains with Green and Great Gables on the horizon, a view which he painted 'dozens of times at all times of year and from dawn to after sunset [...] it is always new and entirely satisfying, and it fills my heart to be there' (Heaton Cooper 1984, pp. 77, 72). Here is a statement reminiscent of Cézanne's 1906 letter to his son Paul as quoted earlier, conveying the painter's experience of the abundance and ever-givingness of nature; in other words nature as a saturated phenomenon.

Another influence was exhibitions of Chinese paintings in London and conversation with the visiting artist Liu Hai Su (Heaton Cooper 1984, pp. 27-28). This influence is evident in the moment of conception of *Scafell Pike from Upper Eskdale* (Heaton Cooper 1936), a painting based on William's brief sketch of a given moment, and his memory of it.

As we were stepping out on the slopes of Yeastyriggs Crag I looked back. It was like a Chinese painting come to life. Simple colour, from the straw-coloured sky into which the higher peaks melted, down through deepening shades of violet-blue, among them the thin gold thread of a stream catching the light, culminating in the dark indigo double-mass of Esk Buttress.

I had only a sketchbook with me so I drew a few lines to remind me of the design and ran to catch up the others.

The scene haunted me for several weeks... (Heaton Cooper 1984, p. vi).

The painting of *Grasmere from Helm Crag* (Heaton Cooper 1963) is a snowy scene painted quickly *en plein air*. In contrast to *Scafell Pike from Upper Eskdale*, there was clearly an originating intentionality, for William describes how he climbed Helm Crag on a frosty February morning with the ‘thought of painting the Lion and the Lamb and all the tumbled rocks of the strange rift through the summit of the mountain.’ Once on the mountain top, intuition which had not been pre-visualised was given: ‘The west wind had carved the snow into sharp sculptured edges that stood out dramatically in contrast with the gentle rolling distances to the south.’ He continues with details of drawing and colour application and concludes by saying that ‘The whole painting was completed in not much more than an hour, so it has the vigour and conviction of a watercolour started and finished in front of the subject.’ (Heaton Cooper 1984, p. 82)

Julian Cooper (1947-) has struck an independent note by dropping the ‘Heaton’ from his name, but is a climber like his father before him, and has painted mountains round the world whilst maintaining his Lake District roots. His paintings bring the viewer close up to the rock face:

I start by scanning the mountain, often through binoculars which sparks off ideas for paintings: amazing rock formations, conjunctions of things, the way the light falls on different surfaces on different days and different times of day. Then I take photographs with a telephoto lens so that I can get right into the mountain [...]

I do still make paintings from life wherever I go to augment the photographs and get into my head what’s going on but I don’t exhibit them with the main work [...]

(The paintings) are about the experience of a mountain rather than its description, so I want to avoid the conventional idea of what a mountain looks like. I don’t want the image just to slot into that prejudiced part of the brain... (Cooper 2004b, pp. 11-13).

In his focusing on particular rock faces, sometimes in quarries, Julian is continuing in a distinctive way the practice of painting details of landscape rather than spacious scenes looking to far horizons. Earlier Lake District



examples featuring rock details include Thomas Hearne's *Sir George Beaumont and Joseph Farington painting a Waterfall* (Hearne 1777), William Havell's *The Beck at Ambleside after Much Rain* (Havell 1808), and William Heaton Cooper's *The Silent Quarry, Little Langdale* (Heaton Cooper 1954) and *The Rocky Shore of Wastwater* (Heaton Cooper 1972). However, Julian's paintings go further than any of these in close analysis of 'the colour and texture of stone at an elemental level' (Cowton 2012, p. 6), and so illustrate very well how the givens of nature keep on emerging as one looks closer and closer. For example, *Bull Ghyll, Honister* (Cooper 2003a), *Small Honister Crag* (Cooper 2003b), *Large Honister Crag* (Cooper 2003-04) and *Honister Incline* (Cooper 2004a), can, on the one hand, all be thought of as inhering in his grandfather Alfred's watercolour *Honister Pass and Buttermere* (Heaton Cooper 1906). This landscape looks down the pass with its stream and path towards Buttermere Lake, with distant mountains on the horizon and a cloudy sky with birds flying. There are the steep crags and screes on the left hand side and a stony slope with different colours of vegetation on the right. The painting realistically shows many givens of nature at the conventional scale of a mountain landscape with distant horizon. Each of Julian's oils, the largest of which, *Large Honister Crag*, is 214 x 153 cm, can represent no more than a small patch in Alfred's scene. But on the other hand each is a 'landscape' in its own right in which, through imagination, one may walk and climb and look at the light on the ridge tops.

### 3.4 Phenomenological analysis

Marion does not use examples from nature in his discussions of saturated phenomena, drawing rather from the worlds of culture and persons. Noting this omission, Gschwandtner (2014b, p. 82) asked the question 'Might nature be interpreted as a "saturated phenomenon"'? In answering this question in the affirmative, she referred to phenomena such as rainforests, tidal pools and anthills, all so complex that they cannot be completely grasped by human consciousness or fully conceptualised scientifically (Gschwandtner 2014b, p. 91). Moreover, she also included the evidence of

nature writers, for example Annie Dillard's encounter with a tree along Tinker Creek which:

...overwhelms and bedazzles her, she finds herself envisioned by it instead of imposing her vision on it. It impacts her when she did not expect it or prepare for it - it has all the connotations of saturation and counter-experience Marion outlines. (Gschwandtner 2014b, pp. 92-93).

In many cases painters' experiences of nature as exemplified in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 are in the same league and hence provide another strand supporting the argument that nature is a saturated phenomenon, or collection of such phenomena. In terms of Marion's types of saturated phenomena as discussed in Section 2.5, nature is seen as impinging upon the painters in terms of *quality*. It is also apparent that nature may impinge in terms of *quantity*, in other words as an ever-changing event, with quantity being experienced through the time dimension and being added to quality without replacing it.

One way in which this may be expressed through paint was taken by William Heaton Cooper in his multiple expressions of the Langdale Pikes, with each expression depicting something different depending on factors such as season, time of day and weather conditions. Hence the same phenomenon, a mountain landscape, appears to the same person in different ways at different times, and the series of paintings as a whole conveys both the givenness of nature and the passage of time. Some other artists have likewise conveyed such ever-changingness, for example the American modernist painter Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986) in her *Black Place* series, depicting a ravine in New Mexico. This was one of her favourite painting places, and the series shows the ravine in different seasons, weather conditions, and degrees of abstraction (Barson 2016, pp. 16-18, 174-179).

Cézanne dealt with the time dimension differently, for his Mont Sainte-Victoire paintings are more than a series depicting a succession of viewpoints and fleeting effects of light and atmosphere; rather the aim within single paintings is the encompassing of change. As such, a single painting of

Mont Saint-Victoire conveys a sense of movement in distinction from the stillness evoked by a single painting of the Langdale Pikes; they are different to a greater degree than can be accounted for by differences in scenery or light between Provence and the Lake District. Capturing such movement required, for Cézanne, observations *en plein air* over prolonged periods, receiving the ever-changing givens of the landscape. Cézanne explained:

Everything we look at disperses and vanishes, doesn't it? Nature is always the same, and yet its appearance is always changing [...] It is our business as artists to convey the thrill of nature's permanence along with the elements and the appearance of all its changes. Painting must give us the flavour of nature's eternity. Everything, you understand. So I join together nature's straying hands [...] From all sides, here, there and everywhere, I select colours, tones and shades; I set them down, I bring them together [...] They make lines. They become objects - rocks, trees - without my thinking about them. (Cited by Gasquet 1991, pp. 147-148).

Yet, as documented in Section 3.2, Cézanne felt that he was incapable of fully expressing his experiences of the richness of nature; this continued throughout his life as discussed in Merleau-Ponty's essay *Cézanne's Doubt*:

Cézanne's difficulties are those of the first word. He thought himself powerless because he was not omnipotent, because he was not God and wanted nevertheless to portray the world, to change it completely into a spectacle, to make *visible* how the world *touches* us. (Merleau-Ponty 1993, pp. 69-70, Merleau-Ponty's italics).

Cézanne's doubts have also attracted comments from the American environmental philosopher Ted Toadvine:

What Cézanne calls "nature" is precisely philosophy's pre-reflective source, that from which philosophy emerges and which conditions its very possibility yet, precisely for this reason, can never be purely thematized by it. In other words, the metaphysical sense of Cézanne's doubt is the inherent contradiction of trying to unearth that moment when nature encompasses us and on which we continue to remain fully dependent even as it escapes us, even as we find ourselves always too late to confront it face-to-face. (Toadvine 2013, p. 111).

It seems unlikely that Cézanne-like anxieties will be suffered by touristic artists following guidebook instructions about where to go and what to look at, with already published pictures in their hands or in their minds, unreceptive to what nature has to give unexpectedly. In such cases, the

same landscapes which as saturated phenomena give so much to open minds and open feelings may well be experienced as what Marion calls 'common' phenomena, in which, at best, fulfilment is adequate, with 'intuition equalling intention.' The resulting artwork would be analogous to a 'technological object' or 'product', whose 'manifestation in "concept" radically precedes its givenness [...] The product confirms - at best - the "concept," and the intuition, the intention, without any surprise, unpredictable landing, or incident ever arising.' (Marion 2002a, pp. 223-224).

A landscape may, then, be either a common or a saturated phenomenon depending upon how the viewer looks at it. This raises again the subject of the active role of the artist, already exemplified in Sections 3.2 and 3.3, where it is clear that in visual expression of saturated phenomena there is interaction between what is purely given and what the painter brings to it. The painter engages in a visual type of hermeneutics which may change as he or she grows older, gazes increasingly at nature, studies geology, is influenced by other painters or aesthetic theories, or moves beyond the influence of one style such as impressionism towards another such as abstraction. These observations fit with an active role of the recipient as argued by Mackinlay (2010, pp. 127-129), against Marion's apparent position in earlier writings that saturated phenomena impose themselves on their own bases (e.g. Marion 2004, p. 43). However, in later analyses it becomes explicit that Marion *does* accept the role of the recipient and that this plays a part in determining whether phenomena are received as common or saturated:

The banality of the saturated phenomenon suggests that *the majority of phenomena, if not all* can undergo saturation by the excess of intuition over the concept [...] even the most simple [...] opens the possibility of a doubled interpretation, which depends upon the demands of my ever-changing relation to them. Or rather, when the description demands it, I have the possibility of passing from one interpretation to the other, from a poor or common phenomenality to a saturated phenomenality. That is, "those things that are the clearest and the most common are the very things that are most obscure, and understanding them is a novelty."

(Marion 2008, p. 126, Marion's italics. Marion's quotation is modified from St Augustine, Confessions 11.22, 28)

The context of Marion's reference to Augustine is the latter's grappling with understanding time, but the idea can equally be applied visually, awakening us to the depths of detail in phenomena we normally assume we 'know' and therefore take for granted. More generally, it may be noted that some paintings take this concept further by suggesting saturation manifesting at different scales from the cosmic to the microscopic or vice versa. The sense of this is captured beautifully by the contemporary English environmental artist Glynn Gorick in some of his work; for example *Circle Painting* (Gorick 1992) has circular zones at different scales, traversing mountains, rocks, and sand grains to a centre depicting atoms of silicon, the most common element in the earth's crust. His *Earth-centred World* (Gorick 2003) contains all this and more, reaching to outer zones of stars and galaxies. In related vein, I independently included stars and galaxies in *The Centre of the Universe* (Baker 2007c), Figure 3.1, where they encircle the local in the form of my home village.

Such paintings would not be possible without science and technology, and associated equipment such as scanning electron microscopes and the Hubble space telescope. These have brought into visibility previously unseen phenomena at both microscopic and macroscopic levels, phenomena which appear as often-surprising givens which are now a source for painters. Most recently and comprehensively, Nesteruk (2015, pp. 438-464) identified the universe as a saturated phenomenon. Such an understanding follows logically from seeing nature in this way, and sits well with *The Three Spirals*, though this painting was started before I made the connection with saturated phenomena albeit finished afterwards. It follows that saturated phenomena are not dependent on scale for their saturation, as recognised intuitively by William Blake in the early nineteenth century:

To see a world in a grain of sand  
And a heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand  
And eternity in an hour.

(Blake 1971, p. 585. From *Auguries of Innocence*, No. VIII in the 'Pickering Manuscript', first published c. 1807).



Figure 3.1.

*The Centre of the Universe*  
(Baker 2007c).

Acrylic on  
fibreboard.

70 x 70 cm.

Centre detail:  
Plan of the  
Shropshire village of  
Ruyton-XI-Towns.

Hence I propose that saturated phenomena may be envisaged as ‘nested.’ This has a bearing on how we understand the sublime, which may be ‘de-sublimated’ through the nesting effect, a concept which will be returned to in Section 3.5.

In the meantime, however, the sublime in nature may be distinguished as a category of saturated phenomenon, encompassing transformative feelings of limitlessness, ‘something rushes in’ (Morley 2010a, p. 12). It is necessary to distinguish between ordinary use of the word ‘sublime’, meaning wonderful or perfect, and its philosophical use which, in including experiences of insecurity, horror and fear, opens a way to address not only nature but also scenes of destruction and war. This will be done in Section 5.5 with reference, *inter alia*, to the apocalyptic sublime and the technological sublime. Etymologically, sublime is derived from the Latin *sub* meaning up to, and *limen* or *limes* meaning lintel, boundary or limit (Morley 2010b, pp. 2-3); the flavour of the word in the context of mountain paintings is well-captured by Turner’s contemporary the German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), especially in *The Watzmann* (Friedrich 1824-1825):

...the image giddies and chills. Your imagination is, as it were, knocked off its feet by a foreground that falls tumblingly away, while at the same time a rush of angular forms drives it upwards - from cold to glacial, from uninhabited moor to unattainable altitude, from not much of anywhere to a visionary nowhere. The peak provocatively pokes at the canvas edge, as if at the very edge of the imaginable. (Bell 2012).

Friedrich was a master of the sublime, but many others have sought to express it in their paintings, with Turner’s previously-mentioned paintings of Buttermere and Ullswater standing out as Lake District examples. Neither Friedrich nor Turner sought to depict nature in a thoroughly representational way; both brought together elements from different sources to achieve the effects they sought, as exemplified in Section 3.3 with *Buttermere Lake, with part of Cromackwater, Cumberland, a Shower* (Turner 1798), and as described above for *The Watzmann*. Unfortunately Turner had difficulties in expressing his ideas and feelings about his painting in writing, or indeed in

conversation (Friedenthal 1963, p. 38); however Friedrich was more forthcoming about the importance of feelings in such work, for example 'I must surrender myself to what surrounds me, unite myself with its clouds and rocks, in order to be what I am. I need solitude in order to communicate with nature' (Friedrich cited by Wolf 2006, p. 47), and 'Every truthful work of art must express a definite feeling' (Friedrich cited by Bell 2012).

A relationship between the sublime and saturated phenomena is specifically made by Marion in *Being Given* (Marion 2002a), not making any connections with nature but with reference to the four Kantian categories:

That is, in terms of quantity, the sublime has no form or order, since it is great "beyond all comparison,"<sup>14</sup> absolutely and noncomparatively. In terms of quality, it contradicts taste as a "negative pleasure" and provokes a "feeling of immensity," of "monstrosity." In terms of relation, it very clearly escapes every analogy and every horizon since it is literally "limitlessness" that it represents. In terms of modality, finally, far from agreeing with our power of knowing, "it may appear in such a way as to contradict the finality of our faculty of judgment." *The relation of our faculty of judgment to the phenomenon is therefore reversed to the point that it is the phenomenon that from now on "gazes" at the I in "respect."* The Kantian example of the sublime would thus permit us to broaden the field of application for the saturated phenomenon. (Marion 2002a, p. 220. My italics).

Marion's ideas concerning reversal of the gaze are definitive in his use of the word 'icon' and will be developed further in Chapter 6, where they are interpreted in terms of inter-personal relationships. However, the above quotation leaves open other possibilities and raises the question 'can natural phenomena be icons?' Athanassoglou-Kallmyer (2003, p. 152), referring to *Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from Les Lauves* (Cezanne 1904-1906b), went so far as to say 'Nature abstracted has been transformed into an icon', but did not elaborate on what she meant by 'icon'.

The question can be addressed in a variety of ways. The actual experience of some people is that they do feel envisioned by natural phenomena,

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<sup>14</sup> The words in inverted commas are Marion's quotations from a German edition of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (first published in 1790) as they appear in Kosky's translation of *Being Given*. In the English translation of *Critique of Judgement* by Meredith, the relevant passage is Kant (2008, pp. 75-76).



exemplified by writer Annie Dillard's experience with a tree as mentioned by Gschwandtner (2014b, pp. 92-93). However, as suggested above, perhaps what is given by a natural phenomenon is a reflection of the way in which it is regarded; and with respect to the subject of iconicity, painters' theological viewpoints need to be considered. The Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions all have distinctive contributions to make.

### 3.5 Theological interpretation

It has been argued that painting processes encompass experiences of saturated phenomena, but how are these interpreted theologically, if at all, by the artists themselves, and how may they be interpreted more generally? These questions will now be examined both with reference to what artists say, and within the larger contexts of different Christian traditions.

In an exceptional mention of God in Cézanne's correspondence, he refers to 'a section of nature or, if you prefer, the spectacle that Pater Omnipotens Oeterne Deus spreads before our eyes' (Cézanne 1904, cited by Danchev 2013, p. 334). The American Beat poet Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997), an 'avid reader' of Cézanne's letters, wrote a striking appreciation of this:

Who dreamt and made incarnate gaps in Time & Space through  
images juxtaposed, and trapped the archangel of the soul  
between 2 visual images and joined the elemental verbs and  
set the noun and dash of consciousness together jumping  
with sensation of Pater Omnipotens Aeterna Deus.  
(Ginsberg 1956, cited by Danchev 2013, p. 335).

I suggest that this expresses in poetry the above analysis that Cézanne's paintings are his response to saturated phenomena in terms both of quality and quantity, whilst taking it further theologically by suggesting his God-consciousness. Yet when it comes to religious practice, Cézanne is claimed by both Catholics and agnostics! On the one hand, the British Catholic artist Patrick Reyntiens (1996, p. 20) says that Cézanne was 'a staunch Catholic',

attended Mass daily, and that his religion was the prime basis for his sense of identity and 'fixity of purpose' in painting. On the other hand, the art critic Roger Fry (1866-1934), a member of the religiously agnostic Bloomsbury Group, suggested that Cézanne continued to believe in the Catholic Church through convention rather than religious conviction (Fry 1984, p. 129, first published 1917). Athanassoglou-Kallmyer (2003, p. 295, note 152) refers to Cézanne's practice as arising from his 'professed sense of his "feebleness" in life' and 'the influence of his devout sister Marie.' She also refers to the local clergy as 'crude'.

However, Cézanne's experiences of the givenness of nature are consonant with the distinctive Catholic understanding of sacramentality, irrespective of the extent to which this may have been apparent in the life of his local church or explicitly recognised by Cézanne. In *The Catholic Imagination*, the American Catholic priest and theologian Andrew Greeley (1928-2013), drawing upon the work of fellow American Catholic priest and theologian David Tracy (Tracy 1981), noted that 'the classic works of Catholic theologians and artists tend to emphasize the presence of God in the world' (Greeley 2001, p. 5). Catholic accentuation of God's immanence leads to the sacramental vision, in which all things such as other people, events, places, objects, the environment and the whole cosmos are 'actual or potential carriers of the divine presence' (McBrien 1994, p. 10). A sacrament has been traditionally understood as 'a visible sign of an invisible grace', but in 1963 Pope Paul VI gave the definition 'a reality imbued with the hidden presence of God' (McBrien 1994, p. 9). The understanding is that it is through material realities that the invisible God is encountered, a view underpinned by interpretation of Jesus Christ as 'the image (icon) of the invisible God' (Colossians 1:15). Such a view is compatible with the phenomenological analysis of Cézanne's work by Merleau-Ponty and Toadvine as presented in the preceding section, but takes it further.

Of the Lake District artists discussed, Gainsborough was the earliest visitor and his idealised views of the beautiful are consistent with his other landscapes. These are generally backgrounds to portraits, a well-known

early example being *Mr and Mrs Andrews* (Gainsborough c. 1750). The newly married couple are set proprietorially in their well-managed estate, and what springs to mind is the injunction of Genesis 1:28 about subduing the earth. Gainsborough's landscapes do not 'challenge our subjectivity' (Jones 2001). In terms of religious practice he was a chapel-goer who did not work on Sundays (Hayes 1980, p. 15).

John Constable was an 'ardent supporter' of the Anglican Church, and a great friend of Archdeacon John Fisher of Salisbury (Lyles 2013). In a revealing letter to his fiancé Maria Bicknell he compares Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry* with *The Nature and Principles of Taste* (first published 1790) by Archibald Alison (1757-1839), a Scottish Episcopalian priest. Constable preferred the latter, in particular liking the last essay *Of the Final Cause of this Constitution of our Nature*. He described this as 'by far the most beautiful thing [...] I ever read' as Alison 'considers us as endowed with minds capable of comprehending the "beauty and sublimity of the material world" only as the means of leading us to *religious sentiment*' (Constable 1814, cited by Lyles 2013, Constable's italics). Alison goes on to say that 'nature, in all its aspects around us, ought only to be felt as signs of His providence, and as conducting us, by the universal language of these signs, to the throne of the DEITY'; and to refer to the universe 'not as the abode only of human cares, or human joys, but as the temple of the LIVING GOD' (Alison 1825, pp. 442, 447, Alison's capitals). In contrast, Burke, though an Anglican who 'took for granted that God was the author of nature', hardly brought the divine into his 'naturalistic' philosophising about human responses to the sublime and the beautiful (Guyer 2015, p. xiii). It may be concluded that Constable was conscious of God through his painting of nature, though the language used by Alison suggests a greater degree of separation between God and nature than the fully sacramental Catholic view. In other words, to see nature as signs leading to God, and the universe as God's temple, is a step removed from seeing nature as imbued with God's presence.

There appears to be no written evidence that Turner was God-conscious, however there are clues to his position. There is his attraction to the sublime in landscapes; and, related to this, his inspiration over many years from James Thomson's poem *The Seasons* which appears 'to have been inspired by a sentimental deism with vaguely pantheist connotations' (Dupré 2004, p. 245). As quoted in Section 3.3., Turner included verses from *Spring* when he exhibited *Buttermere Lake, with part of Cromackwater, Cumberland, a Shower*. However, these verses were Turner's own edited selection, focusing on the sublime, omitting the minutiae, and so altering the balance of Thomson's original (Tomlinson 1990, pp. 181, 184-185). It is also the case that Turner painted a number of biblical subjects (Smiles 2006, p. 113) demonstrating familiarity with the Bible, however these could be interpreted as opportunities for him to paint the apocalyptic sublime as in his *Deluge* paintings discussed in Chapter 4; or light, for example *The Angel Standing in the Sun* (Turner 1846) based on Revelation 19: 17-18. Cohen (1987, p. 137) concluded that for Turner, 'the divine reference never seems to have been important: nature was her own divinity.' Similarly, reflecting on Turner's late paintings, Finley (1979, p. 165) suggests that he found 'an association between the physical and the transcendental', symbolising in 'the swirling vortices of natural forces [...] the idea of Nature's eternity through cyclic continuity.' In other words, whilst there can be little doubt that Turner in his paintings responded to nature as a saturated phenomenon, there is no evidence that he went further than this by interpreting his experience in terms of theology or faith.

Caspar David Friedrich did go further. He was born into a strict Lutheran family (Wolf 2006, p. 17) and remained a life-long Protestant, though not a regular church-goer. In his youth he had encountered a version of pantheism which influenced his own concepts of 'spiritual empathy with the Divine in nature' (Vaughan 1994, pp. 74, 76, 111) and 'a vitally immanent God who is actively moving the forces of the universe' (Van Prooyen 2004, p. 7). His paintings converged with the thinking of the prominent German liberal theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who visited the painter's studio in Dresden in 1818 (Van Prooyen 2004, p. 9). Schleiermacher

conceived of God as revealed to the individual through the everyday world, and though it is not known how closely he influenced Friedrich, the latter wrote 'the noble person recognizes God in everything, the common person sees only the form, not the spirit' (cited by Van Prooyen 2004, p. 6). This prefigures in a theological way the phenomenological analysis that what is seen in the everyday world may be either a common or a saturated phenomenon depending upon how the viewer looks at it.

Adding to Friedrich's recognition of divine immanence as implied in the above quotation, the extreme sublimity of *The Watzmann* points to divine transcendence and raises questions about the relationship between the sublime as a saturated phenomenon and the viewer or painter. It is very different depending on whether one follows Kant in assigning a primary role to 'the mind of the judging subject' (Kant 2008, p. 86), or Marion, who does not. Neither did Friedrich, Grave's analysis being that on the basis of his 'deeply Lutheran faith' Friedrich rejected Kant's affirmation of the power of human reason and with it 'the self-empowerment of the rational individual', regarding 'human claims to the sublime as an act of hubris' (Grave 2012, cited by Bell 2012).

Friedrich's work also raises questions about the relationship between immanence and transcendence in nature, which are addressed below in the discussion of nested saturated phenomena; and provides examples of religious symbolism. In response to criticism of *The Cross in the Mountains* (*The Tetschen Altarpiece*) (Friedrich 1807-1808), amounting to an accusation of sacrilege for allowing a 'landscape to creep onto the altar', Friedrich wrote a rare detailed statement about how the painting was to be understood symbolically, including for example 'The cross stands erected on a rock, unshakeably firm like our faith in Jesus Christ. The fir trees stand around the cross, evergreen, enduring through all ages, like the hopes of man in Him, the Crucified' (Friedrich 1809, cited by Bailey 1989, pp. 6-7). Bailey suggests that this provides us with clues to understanding Friedrich's work as a whole, however Vaughan (1994, p. 74) cautions against reading every detail in every landscape as 'a component in a symbolic language.'

William Heaton Cooper in his autobiography was forthcoming about his religious experience, which included the following when he was seventeen:

I continued to watch the showers falling on the central fells, the sparkling rivulets and the River Brathay flowing into Windermere and down to the sea, and the sun licking up moisture from the sea, while the west wind carried great banks of cloud back again to the mountains. Something about this orderly cycle of the movement of the waters suddenly filled me with inexpressible wonder and delight. I knew then, for myself, that there was a mind responsible for the design and creation of the universe, including myself. For hours I stayed there in ecstasy... (Heaton Cooper 1984, p. 20).

In addition to his Anglican upbringing, two important influences can be picked out in the autobiography. In the 1930's he participated in meetings and discussions of the revivalist Oxford Group or Moral Re-Armament, as a result of which he came to understand that his gift of painting was to be used in God's service (Heaton Cooper 1984, pp. 54-56). William appears to have by-passed more contentious aspects of the group through his sincere beliefs and focus on painting. He does not seem to have felt any mis-match between his beliefs and Chinese philosophy, quoting with approval the painter and philosopher Tsung Ping (375 – 443 CE):

When the eyes respond and the mind agrees with the objects, the divine spirit may be felt, and truth may be attained in the painting. Now the divine spirit has no trace, yet it dwells in each and every form and impresses it with its likeness.

(Tsung Ping as translated by Shio Sakaniski, cited in Heaton Cooper 1984, p. xv).

The *Preface on Landscape Painting* attributed to Tsung Ping, given in full by Sullivan (1962, pp. 102-103), is one of the earliest texts on this subject. Here in ancient Taoist tradition is another prefiguring of the distinction between common and saturated phenomenon and its dependence upon the discernment of the viewer; also, some apparent overlap with both pantheism and sacramentality.

William's son Julian Cooper describes his father as having become 'quite religious through the Oxford Moral Rearmament Movement' and himself as

having 'shied away from the religious stuff' (Cooper cited by Barden 2003). Yet in order to paint it, Julian wished to circumnavigate the sacred mountain of Kailash in western Tibet 'like the pilgrims', and in conversation with the self-described 'walking artist' Hamish Fulton (Tate 2002) expressed his experiences in a way reminiscent of Annie Dillard:

J.C. Do you find that being on your own a lot in mountains that you can understand the belief that locals have that there is a consciousness in the mountain? [...]

H.F. Yes, and *in contrast to the Christian history of being against nature, animate or inanimate*. The question really is how you define life. The life of rock is completely bound up in everything, it's not living in the blood and heart and life span sense of the question but it is part of the whole living environment that's evolving the whole time.

J.C. I feel that too and what I want in the painting is to make the mountain look as though it's aware, that it has a life and is almost looking at you. (Cooper 2007, pp. 12, 20, my italics).

Hamish Fulton's perception of Christian attitudes to nature echoes Greeley's generalisation that in contrast to the Catholic sacramental view, 'the classic works of Protestant theologians tend to emphasize the absence of God from the world' (Greeley 2001, p. 5). Further, *The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis*, a famous paper by the medieval historian Lynn White (1907-1987), points to environmental problems arising from the view that 'Christianity [...] not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends' (White 1967, p. 1205). Biblically, this emphasis, associated particularly with some strands of Western Protestantism, looks to Genesis 1:28; and as already suggested with respect to Gainsborough may be associated with some types of landscape painting. However, it is equally a view in the Hebrew Scriptures that God communicates through nature, for example: 'The heavens are telling the glory of God' (Psalm 19: 1); the voice of the Lord is powerful over nature in Psalm 29: 3-9; animals, birds, plants and fish are humanity's teachers by the hand of the Lord (Job 12: 7-10); and the Lord as cosmic creator and controller *par excellence* speaks out of the whirlwind (Job 38:1 – 42:6). However, in these texts, God speaking and human listening take precedence over what is nevertheless a succession of vivid visual images.

In contrast, Paul's understanding as expressed in Romans 1:20 is that God's nature can be *seen* through creation: 'his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and *seen* through the things he has made' (my italics). This raises the question of how any visible aspects of the creation can be like God, and Sherry (2002, pp. 128-141) uses an analogical approach involving what he calls cross-categorical comparisons. Fitzmyer (1990, p. 835), commenting specifically on Romans 1:20, suggests that human beings, reflecting on the 'multicolored façade' of the created world, can perceive through it 'the great Unseen behind it', with God's qualities 'mirrored' in his works. There is a clear implication in the word 'multicolored' that Fitzmyer means the visual, though the word 'façade' hardly does justice to a sacramental or iconic viewpoint.

White (1967, p. 1206) refers only briefly to Orthodoxy, but it is important to look to the riches of this tradition in addressing the question raised in the previous section 'can natural phenomena be icons in Marion's sense of the intersection of gazes?' In general, the Orthodox Church sees 'a complete correspondence' between icons and the Holy Scriptures. Whilst Scripture is the realm of the Word, Tradition, including iconographical practices, is the realm of the Spirit, comprising a 'unique mode of receiving the revealed Truth' (Ouspensky and Lossky 1982, p. 22). Hence when Chryssavgis and Foltz (2013, pp. 3-4) describe nature as 'a divinely written icon' they are saying that nature can be revelatory; and Hart (2014, p. 114) specifically refers to creation as 'a theophany, a revelation or showing forth of God.' It follows that when Athanassoglou-Kallmyer (2003, p. 152) says of Cézanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from Les Lauves* (Cézanne 1904-1906b): 'Nature abstracted has been transformed into an icon', the implication is that the painting is revelatory of the divine in nature.

Whilst Orthodox iconography is primarily concerned with faces as discussed in Chapter 6, some painted icons do have landscapes, not as mere background but with significance independent of the main subject. Bulgakov (2012, p. 110) cautions that 'this aspect of iconography is still awaiting competent religio-artistic investigation', but says that such landscapes are 'a



kind of icon of nature, an icon not of nature's natural aspect but of its spiritual, sophianic countenance.' For example, trees may be highlighted with gold representing 'the divine glory, the uncreated light'; and shadow is virtually absent because icons reveal 'all things as living and moving and having their being in God: as God is light, there can be no shadow' (Hart 2014, pp. 84-85). As discussed in Section 1.3, *The Three Spirals* model differs from this interpretation in having dark areas, a decision originally arrived at for aesthetic reasons but interpretable both in terms of scientific unknowns and of biblical references to darkness. However, there is gold background representing the uncreated light, and I have followed the iconographic idea of including highlights of gold in the creation.

From the above Orthodox ideas it is suggested that the question 'can natural phenomena be icons?' may be answered in the affirmative; but in the absence of faces what can be said about counter-gazes which, according to Marion as discussed in Section 2.5, are the distinguishing feature of icons as saturated phenomena? In some cases as already exemplified, phenomena such as trees and mountains are experienced as actually looking at the viewer; in other cases the 'counter-gaze' will be the conveying of a sense of presence, communicating something of God through the creation. In other words, the 'counter-gaze' will be nature as saturated phenomenon interpreted theologically.

The concept of nested saturated phenomena was introduced in the previous section, arising from the observation that phenomena which strike painters may be at any scale from the microscopic to the cosmic. Connections may be made with two areas of theological discussion arising from work both ancient and contemporary. First, turning to the fifth and sixth century CE, there are the ideas of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, who defines hierarchy as 'a sacred order, a state of understanding and an activity approximating as closely as possible to the divine' (Pseudo-Dionysius 1987, p. 153, first published 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> century). Hierarchy in this original sense is not 'asymmetrical' with connotations of higher and lower status, but aims 'to produce relation with God' (Marion 2001, pp. 163-164). 'Indeed for every

member of the hierarchy, perfection consists in this, that it is uplifted to imitate God as far as possible, and, more wonderful still, that it becomes [...] a reflection of the workings of God' (Pseudo-Dionysius 1987, p. 154). Whilst the above quotations are from *The Celestial Hierarchy* and hence about angelology, the American Neo-Platonic philosopher Eric Perl points out that Pseudo-Dionysius understood this quality of hierarchy as universal. Hence, applying such thinking to Orthodox creation theology, he concludes that we can come to see 'all reality as a hierarchical structure of theophanies pervaded by the divine light' (Perl 2013, pp. 32-33). In effect, here is a theological interpretation of nested saturated phenomena.

Second, given the concept's essential relationality, there are no rigid dividing lines between, for example, rocks and trees which strike the painter, mountain landscapes, and the galaxies at the limits of the observable universe; or between the beautiful, the sublime and the infinite. As such, nested saturated phenomena are a contribution to approaching problems with the sublime discussed in *The De-sublimations of Christian Art* by Ben Quash, Professor of Christianity and the Arts at King's College London (Quash 2013a). In the wake of Enlightenment thinking, there is a danger that the sublime will be understood theologically in terms of a 'veiled and impenetrable' God being absent from nature, or as a partition separating the beautiful and the infinite:

But Christianity is premised upon [...] a different worldview, namely a metaphysics of *relation*, and of *communication*, in which the infinite, as itself communicative relationship, is the wellspring or source of all natural things and their relationships with each other. God's infinite activity may exceed the comprehension of creatures, but it cannot be conceived as fundamentally in competitive relationship to them, or only present when they are displaced or obliterated. So it suggests a penetration or infusion of the beautiful by the infinite, such that finite creaturely forms can open up to the infinite depths that are theirs by virtue of being created - having as their truest meaning the fact that they are gifts, and more precisely gifts of the self-communicating infinite. Transcendence, on this account, is not the opposite of immanence, or presence, or form; transcendence is at work in *all* these modes of being. (Quash 2013a, Quash's italics).

Given the evidence that painting processes encompass experiences of saturated phenomena, and given the variety of theological interpretations as

explored above, is it possible to conclude that painters may be opened to divine revelation *visually*, through painting nature? In the first place, it seems that some painters may experience such revelation and interpret it theistically; others in terms of pantheism or deism. Second, there is no doubt that the God of the Hebrew Scriptures communicates through and from nature, but here it is God's *words* that are understood as revelatory rather than the natural phenomena in themselves. Third, there is Paul's statement in Romans 1:20, interpretable analogically, that the power and nature of God may be *seen* in the creation. Fourth, there is the view that in nature we may see signs which point to God; this is compatible with those strands of Protestantism which do not see nature as imbued with God's presence, for 'signs do not participate in any way in the reality and power of that to which they point' (Tillich 1964, p. 54). Fifth, symbols do so participate; artists may perceive certain natural phenomena as religious symbols and paint them as such, implying that they see the phenomena as participating in the divine in some way. Sixth, there is the Catholic sacramental vision in which the invisible God may be encountered through nature and the whole cosmos. Seventh, in the Orthodox tradition nature may be interpreted as an icon and hence as revelatory. It is concluded that, as with saturated phenomena *per se*, theological interpretations of nature will be influenced by the prior experience of the viewer, including religious traditions. In particular, familiarity with sacramental or iconic thinking may pre-dispose painters to interpret the saturated givenness of nature as revelatory.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE SECOND SPIRAL (1): GIVENS FROM HUMANITY'S RELIGIOUS QUEST, EXEMPLIFIED BY THE BIBLE

#### 4.1 The Bible and visual imagery

The second spiral, Popper's World 3, comprises those products of the human mind which in effect take on a life of their own, becoming phenomena which may be transmitted from generation to generation. This chapter approaches the Bible in such a way, whilst recognising the complementary viewpoint that it is not *just* a product of the human mind. Three texts are considered, namely the Deluge, Moses and the Burning Bush and Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan; these, like many other examples, have been painted repeatedly over the centuries. The paintings described are meant to be representative of the wealth of visual material offering considerable diversity of interpretation by the painters. Transmission histories of images and interpretations encompass both visual and verbal strands, with interactions including verbal to visual and visual to visual influences. Phenomenological analysis draws upon both Marion and the chronotope concept pioneered by the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975). Bakhtin's focus was understanding how interconnectedness of time and space is expressed in literature, and I have adapted the concept to explore interconnectedness of time and space in paintings of the selected biblical texts. Theological interpretation concurs with the view of Scottish theologian David Brown (1948-) that art may be a vehicle for continuing revelation.

#### 4.2 The Deluge

Genesis 7: 11-19 describes the day of the bursting forth of 'the fountains of the great deep' and the opening of 'the windows of the heavens', with rain falling subsequently for forty days and nights. Noah and his family enter the ark with creatures of every kind. Whilst the scientific evidence does not

support biblical literalists' views of a universal flood, numerous interdisciplinary studies in the Black Sea area do point to extensive flooding in this region after 7000-6640 BCE, and a submerged palaeo-shoreline has been discovered at a depth of 140-155m (Coleman and Ballard 2007, pp. 692-693). Whilst scientific debate continues, it has been suggested (Ryan and Pitman 1998) that here is the basis for the flood story not only in Genesis but also in other Middle Eastern myths, notably the Epic of Gilgamesh (Sandars 1972, p. 111).

Accepting this, a chain of events is proposed, starting in World 1 with the physical event of the flood, and moving visually into the human subjective World 2 as individual eye-witness impressions and feelings. The visual was then transmitted by word of mouth, finding its way into ancient Israel's oral traditions (World 3) and thence into written shape in the book of Genesis (also World 3), this probably being completed during the Babylonian exile or soon after (Whybray 2001, p. 40). During this process the story was interpreted theologically, with the flood being seen as divine punishment for evil and the ark as protection for the righteous. The verbal transmission continues, both as the written text and orally when the text is read aloud and discussed. Working in the first instance from the verbal transmission, artists imagine the event and express it in a succession of images from catacomb art to the present day.

The earliest Christian art does not give much impression of the violent destructiveness implied in the Genesis text, but focuses on Noah and the Ark and hence the theme of salvation for the righteous. For example, the image of *Noah in the Ark* from the 4th century Via Latina catacomb in Rome (Ferrua 1991, pp. 148-151), is dominated by the figure of Noah standing in a small open-topped box-like ark, with his hands outstretched in a prayerful attitude. The flood water, faintly shown by wavy lines, is placid. From the late 6th century Ashburnham Pentateuch comes *The Deluge*, with a closed box-like ark and a foreground of still water, albeit with floating bodies of humans and animals (Verkerk 2002, p. 115). The Nuremberg Bible of 1483 has an ark more like a small house than a simple box, with Noah's head at an end

window and his family within visible through an open front door. The water is gently wavy and in the foreground swim a mermaid, a merman, and a mer-dog (SMU 2013). After all, Genesis 7: 22 says that as a result of the flood 'everything on dry land' died, with the implication that aquatic creatures did not. To touch briefly on a large subject, in the medieval world mermaids were considered to be 'wonders of creation' (Wood 2010, p. 35), depicted in bestiaries together with other creatures both mythical and real, and also as carvings in churches. Wood describes a number of church examples and their symbolism, which includes not just negative interpretations such as warning against seduction but also various context-specific positive aspects including personification of the church 'singing praises to the Lamb and the Lion' (Wood 2010, p. 36).

Images of Noah and the Ark have continued to the present day, but other aspects of the flood emerged pictorially during the Italian Renaissance, notably with Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) and Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564). Characteristically, Michelangelo's *The Deluge* (Michelangelo 1508-09) is dominated by human figures. The Ark is in the background, whilst in the centre a boat full of people is capsizing; in the foreground some of the people struggle up a hill, helping each other. Others are huddled in a makeshift tent yet reaching out compassionately to help a man approaching bearing an apparently lifeless body (Bradbury 2000, p. 86). The question must arise 'Do these people really deserve such wholesale divine retribution?' This question will re-emerge when considering the work of John Martin.

It has been speculated by the biographer Charles Nicholl that Leonardo da Vinci's ten *Deluge Drawings* (e.g. da Vinci c. 1517-1518a, b) were produced with an actual deluge painting in mind, perhaps to rival Michelangelo (Nicholl 2005, p. 476). Though such a work was never produced, Leonardo's notes include thoughts on how to represent the deluge in painting, including the human dimension with people trying to find refuge on trees, towers and hills (da Vinci manuscript RL 12665, cited by Nicholl 2005, p. 475). As it is, the drawings are dominated by the forces of nature reflecting Leonardo's long-

standing recording of natural phenomena including storms and the movements of water. Yet the swirling drawings go beyond this scientific observation and point to what Leonardo himself called 'the pleasure of the painter' and delight in forceful creativity:

*Of the pleasure of the painter.* The divinity inherent in painting transmutes the painter's mind into a resemblance of the spirit of God, for with free forcefulness it gives itself to the creation of diverse things [...] rivers that descend from the high mountains with the force of great floods, dragging along uprooted trees wildly mixed with stones, roots, earth, and foam, pushing away everything that opposes its flow; and the sea with its tempest that battles and rages against opposing winds [...]

(da Vinci Codex Urbinus 36r, cited by Chastel 2002, pp. 51-52).

With some later visualisations there are clear indications of mutual influence, in other words the hermeneutical chain proceeding from one painting to another, from the visual to the visual. From 1660-1664 the French baroque painter Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) produced his highly acclaimed *The Four Seasons*, with winter being represented by *The Deluge* (Poussin c. 1660-1664). Turner saw this on his first continental tour in 1802, and he wrote a critique in his *Studies in the Louvre* sketchbook. Notwithstanding Poussin's reputation, Turner considered that *The Deluge* did not convey 'the conception of a swamp'd world and the fountains of the deep being broken up', and the waterfall was 'not tearing and desolating, but falling placidly in another pool' (Turner 1802, cited by Smiles 2006, p.182). Turner's own painting *The Deluge* (Turner 1805) is among other things a response to Poussin, and addresses these perceived deficiencies by evoking the elemental forces of nature. Turner became 'an important model for younger artists of the apocalyptic Sublime' (Tate 2004), and in particular both John Martin (1789-1854) and Francis Danby (1793-1861) went on to paint *The Deluge* (Martin 1834 and Danby 1840), with Danby possibly 'in competition with his old rival John Martin' (Tate 1972).

As mentioned above, parallels may be drawn between John Martin and Michelangelo in their treatment of the deluge theme. Though Martin's painting is very different from Michelangelo's version in being dominated by physical forces, the two works are alike in re-interpreting the text and

depicting doomed humanity behaving compassionately, in effect challenging the biblical interpretation that 'The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually' (Genesis 6: 5). Strikingly, with respect to Martin's painting, this implied challenge was noticed by participants in a seminar on writing with words and images (Carlisle 2011). The seminar Fellows, namely teachers involved in the educational partnership between Yale University and the New Haven public schools, went to the Yale Center for British Art to look at *The Deluge*, and were asked to respond to just one question, 'What do you see?' Their response differed from the usual assessment of this painting as showing the human figures as 'reduced to triviality, dwarfed by the immense natural or divine forces ominously arrayed against them' (Trumble 2007, p. 319); or playing 'the humiliatingly insignificant role of top dressing on a rock of ages' (Feaver 1975, p. 94). Rather, the Fellows noticed that many of the people in the painting were trying to help others or had their arms raised in prayer, and hence their interpretation was that:

*The Deluge* visualizes values of compassion and community. This reading hardly supports a strictly biblical understanding of Noah's flood as God's well-justified destruction of human beings who have become irreparably evil. Identifying the human beings in the painting as objects of sympathy and identification is, no doubt, a distinctively secular reading, one that would have surprised its original viewers, but the analysis that the Fellows offered is, for this reason, a remarkably valuable revision of conventional ways of understanding *The Deluge*. (Carlisle 2011).

Francis Danby's *Deluge* offers a similar visual critique of the traditional biblical understanding. What is identified by Carlisle above as 'astonishingly original' and a 'secular reading' could just as well, or better, be seen as continuing revelation through art, an idea developed by Brown as discussed in the concluding section of this chapter.

In 1843, Turner painted *Shade and Darkness - The Evening of the Deluge* and *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory) - The Morning after The Deluge - Moses Writing the Book of Genesis* (Turner 1843a, b). As suggested by the second of these titles, there is more to this pair of contrasting paintings than



further visualisations from Genesis. They are experiments in the use of colour, based on Goethe's *Farbenlehre* or *Theory of Colours*, first published in 1810. Turner's annotations in his copy of the English translation point to his interest in this subject (Smiles 2006, pp. 85, 177). It has also been suggested (Butlin and Joll 1984, p. 253) that the paintings were influenced by John Martin, who had exhibited *The Eve of the Deluge* and *The Assuaging of the Waters* as companions in 1840.

Moving from the genre of the apocalyptic sublime to Kandinsky's pioneering abstract art, his *Compositions* and *Improvisations* were painted just before the First World War and are 'obsessed by images of engulfment on a global scale' (Cork 1994, p. 17). Specifically, the deluge theme underlies *Composition VI* (Kandinsky 1913a) and *Improvisation Deluge* (Kandinsky 1913b). The former is of particular interest because, as discussed in Section 2.2, Kandinsky wrote a detailed account of the painting process. He concluded:

So it is that all these elements, even those that contradict one another, inwardly attain total equilibrium, in such a way that no single element gains the upper hand, while the original motif out of which the picture came into being (the Deluge) is dissolved and transformed into an internal, purely pictorial, independent, and objective existence [...] What thus appears a mighty collapse in objective terms is, when one isolates its sound, a living paean of praise, the hymn of that new creation that follows upon the destruction of the world. (Kandinsky 1994, p. 388).

What Kandinsky has arrived at in abstract terms, influenced by music, is perhaps equivalent to Martin's *The Assuaging of the Waters* and Turner's *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory) - The Morning after The Deluge - Moses Writing the Book of Genesis*, both of which point to hope after the deluge.

### 4.3 Moses and the Burning Bush

Exodus 3: 1-6 describes how Moses came to God's mountain of Horeb, where an angel appeared out of a bush which was burning but not consumed. Moses turned aside to look and God called to him. Here is revelation as theophany, and like many other theophanies in the Hebrew Scriptures, Moses' call begins visually. It is the visual which attracts his attention, turns him from his path, and prepares him to hear the voice of God: 'He looked' (another translation, Plaut 1981; 398, is 'He gazed') [...] I must turn aside and look [...] When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see...' It seems that receptivity to the visual is a prerequisite, an essential part of the revelation, as implied in a related context by the Victorian Romantic poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861). What follows is in effect a poetic way of saying that a phenomenon may be either saturated or common depending upon the receptivity of the viewer, as previously discussed in Chapter 3:

Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God;  
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,  
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries...  
(Browning 2008, p. 246, lines 821-824).

There have been many attempts to give scientific explanations of the burning bush, for example the natural gas and volcanic vent theories of the physicist Colin Humphreys (Humphreys 2004, pp. 73-81). However, though it is reasonable to suppose that the visual-verbal-visual chain leading to paintings of the burning bush began with the observation of a striking natural event, this misses the point (Houston 2001, p. 71). What is important is the experience associated with this event and its interpretation, and it is this which was transmitted orally and subsequently written down (Houston 2001, p. 68). It is an experience of the holy, of Otto's '*mysterium tremendum*' (Otto 1958, pp. 12-24) before which Moses hides his face; and of a vocational call.

The first known painting of Moses and the burning bush is a wall painting formerly in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE synagogue of Dura Europos in Syria (Anon 3<sup>rd</sup>

century). Moses, wearing a Hellenistic teacher's robe (Milgrom and Duman 2013) looks out at the viewer and appears to be giving a lecture about the adjacent bush; hence this painting can be seen as an interpretation of the text within the particular religious and cultural environment of a Hellenised Jewish community. In similar vein, from the 4<sup>th</sup> century Via Latina catacomb in Rome we have Moses in Roman costume (Anon 4<sup>th</sup> century). He is taking off his sandals, though there is no burning bush in sight.

A sense of theophany is conveyed to a much greater extent by the icon *Moses and the Burning Bush* at St Catherine's Monastery, Sinai (Anon 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century). Moses' posture is reverential and his eyes, whilst not looking directly at the bush, express deep awareness, awe and concentration. The monastery is built around the supposed site of the burning bush, and Christian worship with icons has been maintained here since the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE (Cormack 2007, p. 7). The icon is described in detail by the Byzantine art scholar Doula Mouriki and she also discusses the motivation behind its production (Mouriki 1992, pp. 171-178, 182-184), pointing to specific liturgical significance in the Byzantine rite as practised at the monastery. As Hart (2011, p. 3) puts it: '...the icon is an integral part of a larger sacred dance, a liturgical life that involves the church building, the space within it, the hymnography of the Church, and the movements of the clergy and people during services.'

In this particular Sinai icon there is no allusion to the Virgin Mary, though Mouriki (1992, p. 183) refers to other images at the monastery which reproduce 'the so-called iconographic type of the Virgin of the (Burning) Bush,' also called Theotokos the Unburnt Bush icons. They reflect a theological interpretation of the burning bush as a prefiguration of the virgin birth, following Gregory of Nyssa who wrote 'The light of divinity which through birth shone from her into human life did not consume the burning bush, even as the flower of her virginity was not withered by giving birth' (Gregory of Nyssa 1978, p. 59. First published 4<sup>th</sup> century CE). The type has continued to the present day, presumably reflecting, at least in part, a visual-visual transmission. For example Russian icons from around 1700 to 1890

CE are reproduced in Sardella (2013), all with the central figures of Mary and the Christ Child within a stylised burning bush. A recent Coptic example in Alexandria (Sadek 2002) shows Mary, without the Christ Child, in the middle of the burning bush, and a reverential Moses before her.

The visual expression of Gregory of Nyssa's theology was not restricted to icons but appeared in other ways during the medieval period with its cult of the Virgin. Two French examples are Nicolas Froment's *The Burning Bush* in Aix-en-Provence cathedral (Froment c. 1476), and Georges Trubert's *Madonna of the Burning Bush* (Trubert c. 1480-1490), an illustration in a book of hours. In the former, Mary holding the Christ Child appears in the middle of a circle of burning bushes, whilst Moses and an angel are in the foreground. In the latter, Mary holding the Christ Child is shown in a gold-framed picture within the stylised flames of the Burning Bush, a picture within a picture, and Moses is nowhere to be seen.

Paintings outside the iconographic tradition eventually moved away from the 'Mary in the Burning Bush' type. From the humanising Italian Renaissance come Domenico Zampieri's *Landscape with Moses and the Burning Bush* (Zampieri 1610-1616) and Domenico Fetti's *Moses before the Burning Bush* (Fetti 1613-1614), with the former set in an extensive Italian landscape and the latter a close-up showing Moses taking off his sandals before the burning bush. Neither painting has an overt representation of God, in contrast to the Spanish baroque *The Burning Bush* by Francisco Collantes, in which God appears as a bearded man bathed in light (Collantes c. 1634).

Turning to more recent times, the Jewish-Russian-French visionary artist Marc Chagall (1887-1985) produced several images of Moses and the Burning Bush in various media - etchings, coloured lithographs, ink and pastel, gouache and oils. The pictures are part of his Bible series of over 100 works, started in 1931, continuing for 35 years, and now exhibited in a dedicated museum, the Musée National Message Biblique in Nice. They have the imaginative colourful dreamlike quality characteristic of Chagall, and his Jewish heritage is evident in those images which have the Hebrew

tetragrammaton in the bush representing God (e.g. Chagall 1958; 1965-1966). Moses is depicted as horned, though close examination shows that these are 'horn-like rays', in line with the Jewish understanding of Exodus 34: 29 (Plaut 1981, p. 661, note 29).

Whilst the burning bush theophany is described in Chapter 3 of Exodus, well before the 'horn-like rays' event when Moses descended Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant, some of Chagall's pictures in fact include a second image of Moses with the tablets, to the left of the central burning bush (e.g. Chagall 1960-1966). Thus the pictures are going beyond the text, but making a visual connection between the two transformative experiences on Mount Sinai.

The British painter Albert Herbert (1925-2008) described himself as religious, and converted to Catholicism in the 1950's, albeit not uncritically:

At a certain age you realise what you are and there is nothing you can do about it [...] I just am religious. It is not rational but if I try to reject or suppress it, I have a sense of loss. (Herbert 1999, cited by Harries 2013, p. 108).

His paintings have been described as idiosyncratic and mystical (England 2008) and his many biblically-inspired paintings include several versions of Moses and the Burning Bush, for example *The Burning Bush* (Herbert 1997) and *Burning Bush* (Herbert 2001). The former has Moses prostrate in front of the bush in a setting which resembles a garden suburb, with people looking out of the windows of the houses. There is a small area of burning red in the middle of the bush. The latter has Moses standing before the bush in which God in human form (or perhaps it is the angel?) is speaking from the left-hand side; the right-hand side of the bush is fiery red but so also is the area immediately behind the upper half of Moses' naked body. Perhaps this speaks of Moses' transformation through his encounter with God.

Additionally, and unusually for any artist, Herbert combines the above interpretations with a continuation of the previously mentioned link with Mary in his *Nativity with Burning Bush* (Herbert 1991). This is not, however, in the specifically iconic tradition. The burning bush is on the right, Mary is in the

centre holding out Jesus, and on the left is an old man kneeling, possibly Moses, but this is not clear (Harries 2013, pp. 106-107).

*The Burning Bush* (Koli 1984) by Indian printmaker Paul Koli is dominated by a fiery orange and yellow shape within which both the trunk and branches of the bush and the eyes of God can be discerned faintly. A sense of holy ground and awe is conveyed effectively by the depiction of Moses simply as a pair of bare feet showing the soles, and a pair of prayerful hands, showing the palms.

#### **4.4 The Parable of the Good Samaritan**

‘Who is my neighbour’ asked a lawyer, to which Jesus’ response was to tell the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan and then throw the question back (Luke 10: 25-37).

The French artist James Tissot (1836-1902) probably gives the best impression of how the original hearers would have envisioned the setting of Jesus’ parable, in his painting *Le Bon Samaritain* (Tissot 1886-1894). This conforms well to the description of Levine (2014, p. 87), that ‘The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was an eighteen-mile rocky path that descended from about 2,500 feet above sea level to Jericho’s 825 feet below.’ Tissot scrupulously aimed at capturing authenticity in his many biblical paintings and to this end spent many months in the Holy Land (Thomson 1982, p. 389). *Le Bon Samaritain* has the stripped victim in a stony ditch, with rocky mountain slopes in the background, dangerous-looking territory with plenty of hiding places for robbers.

As to how Jewish hearers would have thought about Samaritans, in Jesus’ time there was heightened hostility in the wake of an incident between 6 and 9 CE when Samaritans had defiled the Temple court by scattering human bones (Knoppers 2013, p. 210). The idea of the despised Samaritan being a good neighbour would have been shocking, epitomised by the fact that the

lawyer cannot bring himself to say 'Samaritan' but makes do with 'The one who showed him mercy' (Karris 1990, p. 702). Stern (2006, p. 215) illustrates Jewish enmity and mistrust by referring to a series of laws which discriminated against Samaritans, for example, important documents normally had to be certified by two witnesses, but were not valid if one of the witnesses was a Samaritan.

The early church interpreted the parable allegorically, with the Good Samaritan seen as Christ, Jerusalem as paradise, the wounded man as Adam or fallen humanity, the robbers as demons or evil powers, Jericho as the world into which the wounded man fell, and the inn as the church (Roukema 2004, pp. 57, 61, 62, 71). These interpretations, from Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Augustine and others, are illustrated in illuminated manuscripts and icons, typically in multi-scene depictions with a haloed Christ appearing at different stages of the story concluding with the inn. Such an illustration (Anon 6<sup>th</sup> century a) is found in the Codex Purpureus Rossanensis, the oldest surviving illuminated Gospel manuscript (Gowler 2017, p. 54). In the first Rossano scene, Christ as the Good Samaritan is attending to the wounded man, helped by an angel, and in the second, he is paying the innkeeper. The Good Samaritan mural at St Catherine's Monastery (Anon 14<sup>th</sup> century) has further visual allegorical exegesis after Augustine, for one of the scenes shows Christ as the Samaritan carrying the wounded man to the inn instead of putting him on an animal. In other words, Christ is the beast of burden bearing humanity's salvation (Gowler 2014; Gowler 2017, pp. 42-43). Allegorical interpretations have continued to the present day in the Orthodox Church, for example Gillis (2015) points out that Russian Orthodox hymns 'teach us to identify with the wounded man, whom Christ (the Good Samaritan) rescues [...] the inn keeper represents the bishops and priests of the Church.' A late 20<sup>th</sup> century fresco at the Greek Orthodox monastery of St John, Makrinos, depicts Christ as the Good Samaritan (Skete 2015), and a Russian Orthodox sermon by Krestiankin (2012) is illustrated with a contemporary icon in which again Christ is the Good Samaritan, and six robbers are depicted as horned black demons.

Apart from the allegorical strand, other approaches emerged during the 16<sup>th</sup> century reflecting Renaissance influence; and from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day there has been a considerable growth in both the number of paintings produced and the diversity of artists' interpretations. However, there is no obvious historical trend within this variety, hence the images will be looked at in terms of the issues they raise. In order to avoid excessive repetition, unless otherwise specified the paintings mentioned are all titled *The Good Samaritan*.

The following areas may be identified:

- Features common to all the diverse images.
- Different cultural expressions
- Recapturing the shock
- Contexts of fear
- The viewer's perspective.

What features are common to all the images? Some pictures pay minimal or no attention to landscape features, the robbers, and those who have passed by ignoring the victim, in other words the images have been uncoupled from the full scope of the original parable. This minimal approach is in effect illustrating the more general theme of 'Golden Rule' ethics, for example as expressed in Matthew 7:12 'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you.' Other expressions of the Golden Rule can be found in most of the world's major religions and in the ethics of Plato and Aristotle (Reilly 2010, p. 7).

Illustrating such ethics, the particular case of the relationship between the Good Samaritan and the victim has been depicted in various ways, showing support, compassion, and various practicalities. Two paintings by the English artist George Frederic Watts (1817-1904) show the injured man and his helper standing full length, with the focus on the physical support being given by the Samaritan (Watts 1849-1904; 1850-1852). The Swiss Ferdinand Hodler



(1853-1918) has the injured man lying down, with the Samaritan semi-recumbent, his arm cradling the victim's head and with his face full of compassion (Hodler 1885). As for practical details of help, a painting by the Italian Jacopo Bassano (1510-1592) shows the Samaritan with a flask of oil or wine clearly visible (Bassano c. 1562-1563); the Italian Jacopo Negretti also called Palma il Giovane (1544-1628) has the wounded man being bandaged (Negretti early 17<sup>th</sup> century); and in a fresco by contemporary American artist Ben Long, the Samaritan is using his own clothing to staunch the wounded man's flow of blood (Long 2001). The Italian painter and print-maker Domenico Campagnola (c.1500-1564) painted the wounded man in the first stages of being lifted onto the Samaritan's donkey (Campagnola c. 1530's); and Eugène Delacroix has the wounded man being lifted onto a horse (Delacroix 1849), an image which inspired *The Good Samaritan, After Delacroix* (van Gogh 1890).

The final practical help is at the inn. In *The Moon and the Good Samaritan* (Bonnell 1997) the contemporary American artist Daniel Bonnell depicts a night-time scene, with the wounded man being taken down from the Samaritan's horse on arrival at the inn; the Dutch master Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) painted the same subject as a day-time event (Rembrandt 1630). Rembrandt's painting has the Good Samaritan paying the innkeeper on arrival, whereas the biblical text states that he paid when he departed the following day; research by the Dutch art historian Christian Tümpel (1937-2009) has pointed to the likely explanation: 'In his images Rembrandt gets almost all his iconographic motives from pictorial tradition' (Tümpel 1972 trans. Białostocki 1984, p. 11). In other words, visual to visual transmission has occurred, and in a later publication, Tümpel (2006, p. 215) gives the specific example of Rembrandt's depiction of the Good Samaritan having been influenced by an etching of Jan van de Velde (1593-c.1641), a Dutch painter and engraver.

The above-mentioned pictures along with many others have both the victim and the Samaritan with European features, but there are a variety of other cultural expressions, most of which have appeared relatively recently. For

example, an African version (Jesus Mafa 1973) is set in a parched hilly landscape, with the Samaritan kneeling by and supporting the victim. This is one of a series initiated by the Catholic Church in Cameroon in the 1970s, with Gospel scenes being enacted by village people, photographed, and used as a basis for paintings by Bénédicte de la Roncière. Rodolfo Arellano's depiction (Arellano 1981) again has the Samaritan kneeling, attending to the victim who has multiple stab wounds. A priest, a nun and a bishop are on their way to a church in the background. This comes from a series of Gospel paintings produced in Solentiname, Nicaragua, in 1981 and 1982. Here the priest, poet and liberation theologian Ernesto Cardenal had established a religious community in which painting was encouraged (Tellez 2015); the results reflected interpretation of Gospel texts in terms of recent military dictatorship with church complicity.

Sadao Watanabe (1913-1996) made many prints illustrating Gospel scenes in the Japanese *mingei* or folk art tradition, and the Good Samaritan was a favourite subject. Watanabe was a master of conveying facial expressions with just a few lines, and his 1979 version stands out for the interchange of expressions between the compassionate Samaritan and the hurt and wondering victim on the donkey (Watanabe 1979). He Qi (c.1950-), a teenager at the start of the Cultural Revolution in China, has also produced many Gospel paintings, stylistically rooted in Chinese tradition but with influences from medieval, Renaissance, and modern art. His painting (He Qi 2001), with the victim lying over the back of a donkey supported by the Samaritan, unites all these influences in a colourful abstract pattern. He finds his paintings can be a bridge between East and West for sharing the Gospel of peace (Hornik 2006, p. 69; Wunderink and Gnidovic 2008), visually making the point that Christianity is not just for the West.

Another type of interpretation is exemplified by William Small (1843-1931), a socially realistic Scottish artist. His painting (Small 1899) illustrates the 'secularisation' of the words 'Good Samaritan', understood to mean any 'charitable do-gooders' (Levine 2014, p. 72). It portrays the 'selfless ideal of a doctor who did not pass by a child in need' (Ackland *et al.* 2004, p. 688).

Coming from a time when there was no National Health Service and doctors' fees were the norm, here is a country doctor by the edge of a field, freely ministering to a child with obviously impoverished family members standing by.

None of the 'Golden Rule' ethical images mentioned above, focusing on relationships between the victim and the Samaritan, suggest the enmity and mistrust between Jews and Samaritans; however some artists have aimed to recapture the shock presumably experienced by the original hearers in terms more familiar to today's world. For example, the contemporary American Amy Watts, evoking the Wild West, has the Samaritan as a Native American and the wounded man as Euro-American (Watts undated). In related vein Stephen Sawyer (1952-) depicts an African American helping a Euro-American victim (Sawyer 2017), leading Bagasao-Cave (2013) to comment that the cultural heritage of the USA 'has been shaped by the history of slavery and racism' and that this is perhaps 'an important perspective for American readers to consider when reading this parable.' The relevance of this can be emphasised in the face of continuing racial tensions. Sawyer himself dedicated the painting 'to the continent of Africa and its inhabitants worldwide', saying:

For the African nation to be treated as Samaritans in the 21st Century is ungodly. To judge a nation, race, or individual who lives outside the traditions of any religion, including Christianity, is ungodly. To modify the truth about entrance into the Kingdom of God by allowing the voice of man's need for tradition, to so limit and strangle the truth of Jesus' words, contains within it the seeds of self-destruction. (Sawyer 2017).

The English painter Dinah Roe Kendall (1923-) also depicts the Good Samaritan as black and the victim as white (Kendall 1994). When asked 'What has been the best bit in your career as an artist?' Kendall replied:

I think my exhibition in the Chapel of Doncaster Prison. The prisoners were very interested [...] They asked me all sorts of questions and got quite involved with the paintings. My 'Good Samaritan' painting interested them particularly for the Samaritan is black and the injured man white - that spoke to them quite strongly, because of the mix among the prisoners. The prison's governor

bought the painting, and used it when giving lectures about the prison mix of backgrounds, often to the police. (Kendall 2014, cited by Sewell 2014, p. 24).

Another English artist, Caroline Mackenzie (1952-) worked in Jyoti Sahi's Christian Art Ashram near Bangalore for six years, and subsequently produced *The Good Samaritan* (Mackenzie 1999-2000) as one of a series of oak wood carvings for St Helen's Roman Catholic Church in Caerphilly, Wales. The Samaritan is depicted as an Indian woman and the victim is a young western woman.

A sense of shock is taken further, surpassing all the above situations which are at least humanly possible, by representing the Samaritan as an alien, a different life-form. The Venezuelan-born surrealist artist Carlos Solis (1966-) portrayed the Samaritan as a being combining a humanoid body and a tree-like head, towering above the victim who is sitting hunched up against a wall. In the alien's branches are nests each one containing an egg, and an egg is being offered in a spoon-like hand (Solis 2011). Solis writes:

The common perception of what is good or bad could be tricky depending on what culture you are in [...] In my interpretation, I clearly illustrated a strange being, that we might find scary or intimidating. But, how a Good Samaritan looks like shouldn't be the focus, the focus should be in our actions not our looks. We should be able to sense who brings peace, love and good intentions to assist and help someone in need. The Samaritan in my painting is showing the capacity to give everything he has to offer to the poor man in distress. Each egg represents a part of his soul, heart and possession. Even though he does not look like much, his actions are being praised and admired in the heavens. (Solis 2011).

A better known alien features in a cartoon by the English storyteller and poet Thomas Thurman (1975-). The caption is '*But a certain Dalek saw him and took pity on him*', and Thurman comments 'The point of the Good Samaritan story is blunted if we forget the place of the Samaritans in that culture. Here's an attempt to redress that' (Thurman 2015, p. 9). The Daleks feature in the long-running BBC television series 'Dr Who' and are 'one of the most feared races in the universe', intent on destroying all life except Dalek life (Dr Who website 2015).

Portrayal of the Good Samaritan as an alien highlights the problem of fear getting in the way of good intentions; in particular Solis' surreal painting mentioned above has the victim hunched against a wall with his face buried in his arms and one can imagine his rising fear as the alien approaches. Fear may also arise through geographical and sociological context, which in the original scenario of the Jerusalem to Jericho road was isolated bandit country. Whilst a good impression of this is found in the already-mentioned *Le Bon Samaritain* by Tissot, some other depictions hardly resemble the original scene but engender feelings of foreboding in other ways. For example Rembrandt, in his *Landscape with the Good Samaritan* (Rembrandt 1638), shows the wounded man supported by the Samaritan as small figures in a vast European landscape, between dark trees and with threatening dark clouds above. An illumination from the 15<sup>th</sup> century manuscript Ludolph of Saxony's *Vita Christi* goes further by showing the Good Samaritan attending to the victim on a path by the side of a dense European woodland, with the heads of three robbers poking out from the foliage (Ludolph of Saxony 1490's). Robbers are also shown in a number of other images; for example the central scene of a three scene serigraph by the Mexican-Swedish American John August Swanson (1938-) shows the moment of attack, with the robber wielding a stick and the victim with his hands protecting his head (Swanson 2002).

Why did the priest and Levite pass by? Much thought has been given to this question, but from a Christian perspective relatively little attention has been paid to this context of fear. A notable exception was Martin Luther King, who in his last speech delivered on 3 April 1968, the day before he was assassinated, said:

I'm going to tell you what my imagination tells me. It's possible that those men were afraid. You see, the Jericho road is a dangerous road [...] It's really conducive for ambushing [...] And you know, it's possible that the priest and the Levite looked over that man on the ground and wondered if the robbers were still around. Or it's possible that they felt that the man on the ground was merely faking. And he was acting like he had been robbed and hurt, in order to seize them over there, lure them there for quick and easy seizure. And so the first question that the priest asked - the first question that the Levite asked was, "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" But then the Good

Samaritan came by. And he reversed the question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?" (King 1968).

This interpretation, with which Levine (2014, p. 94) concurs from a Jewish perspective, stands in contrast to the more usual one based upon the requirements of religious obligations. As summarised by Franklin (2001, p. 942), the priest and Levite's regard for Torah purity requirements, namely that contact with a possible dead body would have prevented them from fulfilling their duties, 'led them to make a decision which the action of the Samaritan showed to be wrong.' This would reflect a different aspect of fear, difficult to show visually, that is fear of failing before God's law, or at least failing to fulfil expectations within the religious establishment. Bauckham (1998, pp. 479-480, 484), who includes the words 'scrupulous priest' in the title of his paper, argues that it is *not* the intention in the parable to attack priests. Rather, he says, Jesus carefully constructs an unusual case to set up an issue of Torah interpretation, pointing to the commandment 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' (Leviticus 19:18) as overriding the purity commandments.

Can we see ourselves as the priest or Levite? The already-mentioned paintings by Rodolfo Arellano and Dinah Roe Kendall both have Christian equivalents of the priest and Levite passing by, situations in which faithfulness to the Torah would not apply. Instead, another issue is raised - in Kendall's painting the depiction of the priest is particularly good at conveying a sense of *hurry*, raising the idea that hurry to fulfil religious obligations may inhibit a caring response. What if the priest is on his or her way to lead a church service? A famous experiment involving Princeton seminary students in a staged scenario with a shabbily dressed 'victim' concluded:

A person not in a hurry may stop and offer help to a person in distress. A person in a hurry is likely to keep going. Ironically, he is likely to keep going even if he is hurrying to speak on the parable of the Good Samaritan [...]  
Thinking about the Good Samaritan did not increase helping behavior, but being in a hurry decreased it. (Darley and Batson 1973, p. 107).

Do we see ourselves as the victim or as the helper, and have we thought about what would it be like to be the other character? 'Is it easier to be the

noble Samaritan, overlooking race and status to help someone who is in trouble, than it is to see yourself as the person who has been victimised and then ignored by his own?' (Bagasao-Cave 2013). The American James Janknegt (1953-) dresses his characters in casual clothes and places them in versions of his own urban landscapes, a type of inculturation. In *Portrait of YOU as the Good Samaritan* (Janknegt 2009a) he pictures himself as the victim and in effect leaves a space for the viewer. He describes it as follows:

I decided I did not want to show the actual Good Samaritan in the painting. Instead starting on the left side of the painting I have the robbers escaping on a bicycle followed by the priest carrying a collection plate full of money, then the Levite, an old hippie, with a tie die shirt and strumming a guitar and finally we see the victim. The idea is that YOU are the Good Samaritan being the next person to see the naked beat up man. How will you respond?

To make the painting more personal I painted the beat up man as a self portrait. The man is holding three paint brushes. The robbers can be seen carrying off his clothes and his art supplies. (Janknegt 2009b).

It is of interest that a group of York Saint John University undergraduates, during discussion on the 2015 Religion and the Visual Arts module, raised issues of fear and responsibility having looked at this painting. The issue of fear was reminiscent of Martin Luther King's insights transposed to an urban landscape - who might be hiding behind a building and with what intentions? The issue of responsibility arises when one's actions inevitably involve others, for example if the potential Good Samaritan arrives at Janknegt's scenario but is looking after a child, is it right to draw the child into a potentially dangerous situation?

As for seeing oneself as the wounded man, Solis' surreal painting is particularly conducive to this because it is so difficult to identify with a 'Samaritan' in the form of an alien whose appearance and actions cannot be 'read'. The wounded man's experience of being helped by an enemy may well have been confusing or frightening, as would contemporary equivalents. Moreover, assuming that the wounded man was a Jew, assistance from a person seen as unclean, and the administering of non-kosher oil and wine, would have been religiously repugnant (Papineau 2004, pp. 89, 95).

#### 4.5 Phenomenological Analysis

The observations in previous sections, concerning how a selection of artists through the centuries have responded to just three texts, point to the Bible's abundance as a source of inspiration and amply support Quash's suggestion that it is a saturated phenomenon:

The Bible is not just a tool. It is a 'You', not an 'It'. To open it is to come into the presence of something living and transformative; something actively present. To abide with it is to recognize, moreover, that it is what the contemporary French Catholic philosopher Jean-Luc Marion might call a 'saturated phenomenon', one that contains more than any one reader or any one epoch can simply and completely and definitively wring out of it. Its power to affect successive new situations and to encounter new people is apparently limitless. It is a text that keeps on giving. (Quash 2012, p. 55).

However, Marion does not discuss the Bible in this way, rather he uses texts notably Christ's transfiguration and resurrection to make the point that Christ is 'an absolute phenomenon' who 'saturates every possible horizon' (Marion 2002a, p. 238). This approach has been criticised by Mackinlay (2010, pp.186-187) on the grounds of using an 'eclectic' selection of 'proof texts' without due regard for contemporary scholarship; however this criticism does not negate the possibility of artists experiencing the Bible as a saturated phenomenon. Looked at this way, one is reminded of Marion's analysis of a lecture hall in *In Excess*, where to describe what happens in it as a saturated phenomenon of the event type would require engagement in a hermeneutic 'without end and in an indefinite network' (Marion 2002b, p. 33). The Bible likewise can be seen within a larger picture as embedded in an endless hermeneutic and network. At the same time, the texts have the characteristics of saturation in their own right, hence it is suggested that the Bible as a saturated phenomenon is 'nested' as has been argued for 'nature' in the previous chapter.

Figures 4.1 to 4.3 offer schematic summaries for the three texts examined and are based upon ideas introduced in Chapter 1 and evidence which has emerged in this chapter, namely that with respect to painting processes two major hermeneutical spirals can be distinguished, the visual and the verbal.



Hence a double helix model is used, based upon the molecular structure of DNA, in which the two strands of each molecule are complementary and bonded together with cross links. This two-spiral structure is not meant to suggest that other hermeneutical inputs, such as music, are irrelevant, rather that the visual and the verbal are particularly important with respect to painting. The conceptual relationship between Figures 4.1 to 4.3 and *The Three Spirals* model is that the structures of the former are incorporated within the second 'culture' spiral of the latter, which includes an immense number of such strands of transmission.

The structures of Figures 4.1 to 4.3 encourage looking backwards and forwards, and hence are suited to historical considerations and some philosophical approaches such as Bakhtin's work on the 'chronotope' and dialogism in literature.

We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature [...] In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. (Bakhtin 1981, p. 84, Bakhtin's italics).

There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and boundless future). Even *past* meanings, that is those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) - they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. (Bakhtin 1986, p. 170. Bakhtin's italics).

It is suggested that Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, and Julia Kristeva's related concept of intertextuality (Kristeva 1986) may be applied to the visual; and that considering the Bible as event, in addition to the strand of the text itself continuing through the ages, there is a vast and ever-growing dialogic hermeneutic with both verbal and visual strands interacting with each other. This visual-verbal chronotope, which can hardly be taken in by any one person, is a given part of the context within which biblically-inspired paintings emerge.

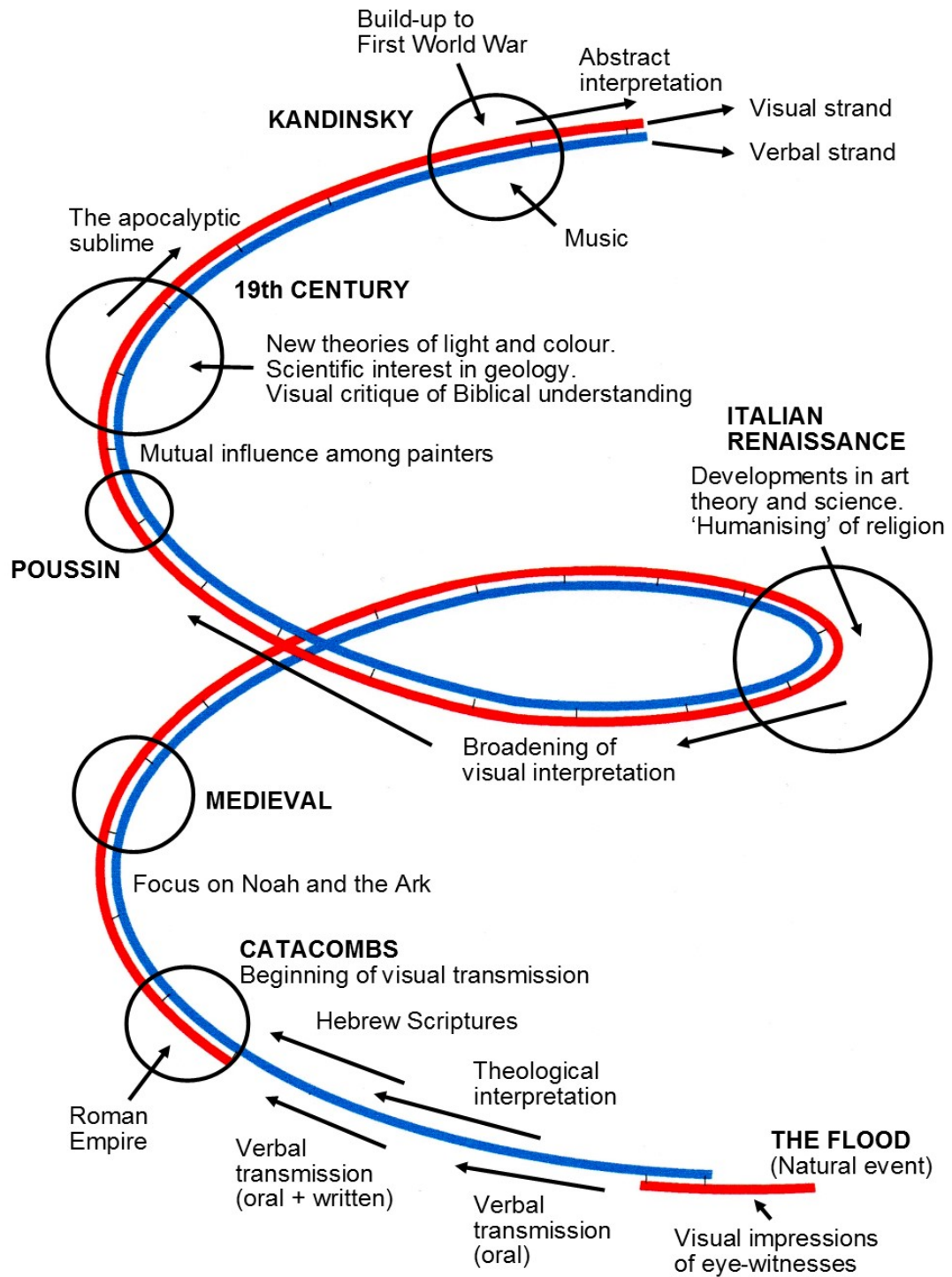


Figure 4.1. Paintings of the Biblical Deluge:  
A Visual-Verbal Chronotope.

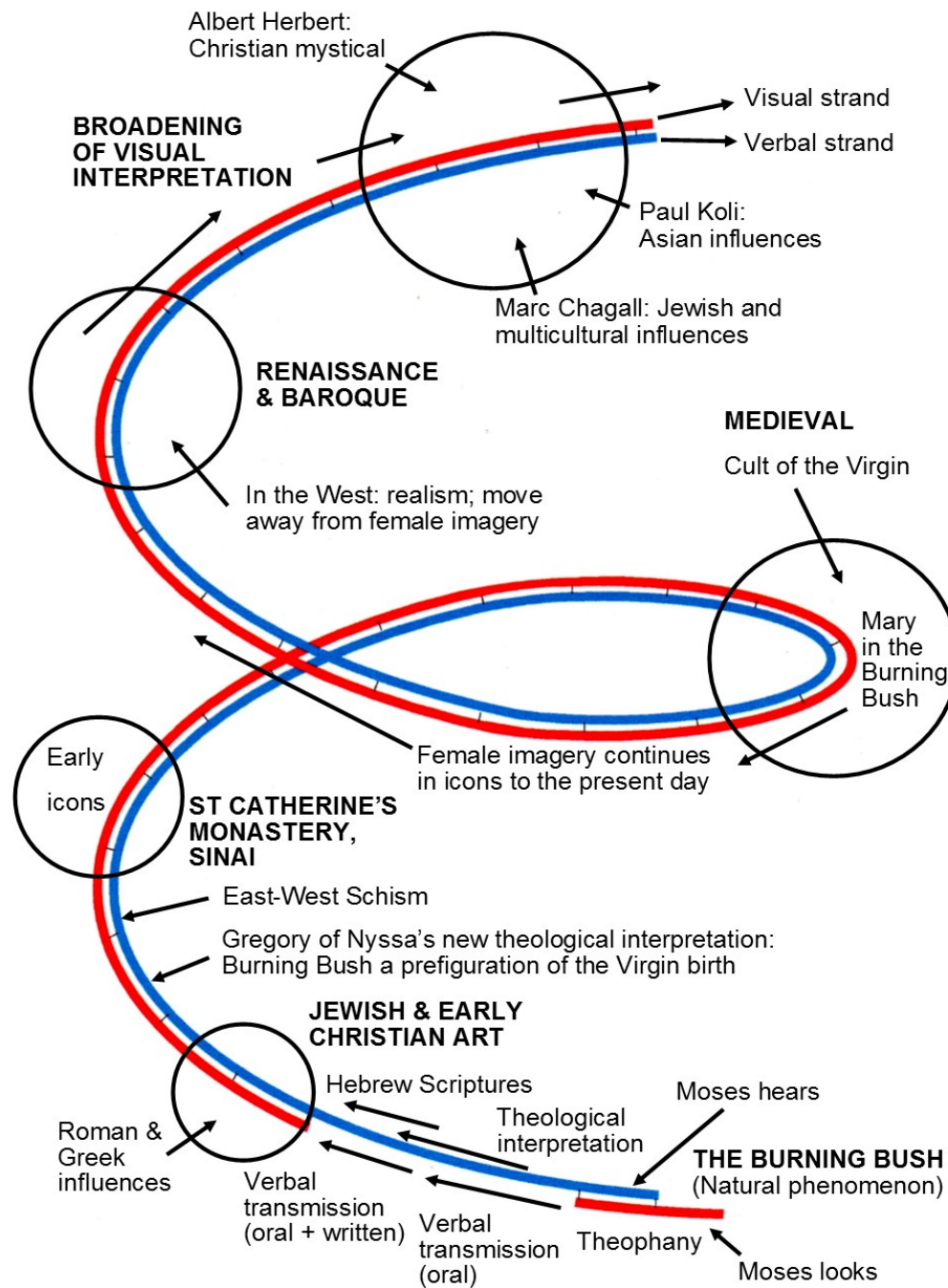


Figure 4.2. Paintings of Moses and the Burning Bush:  
A Visual-Verbal Chronotope.

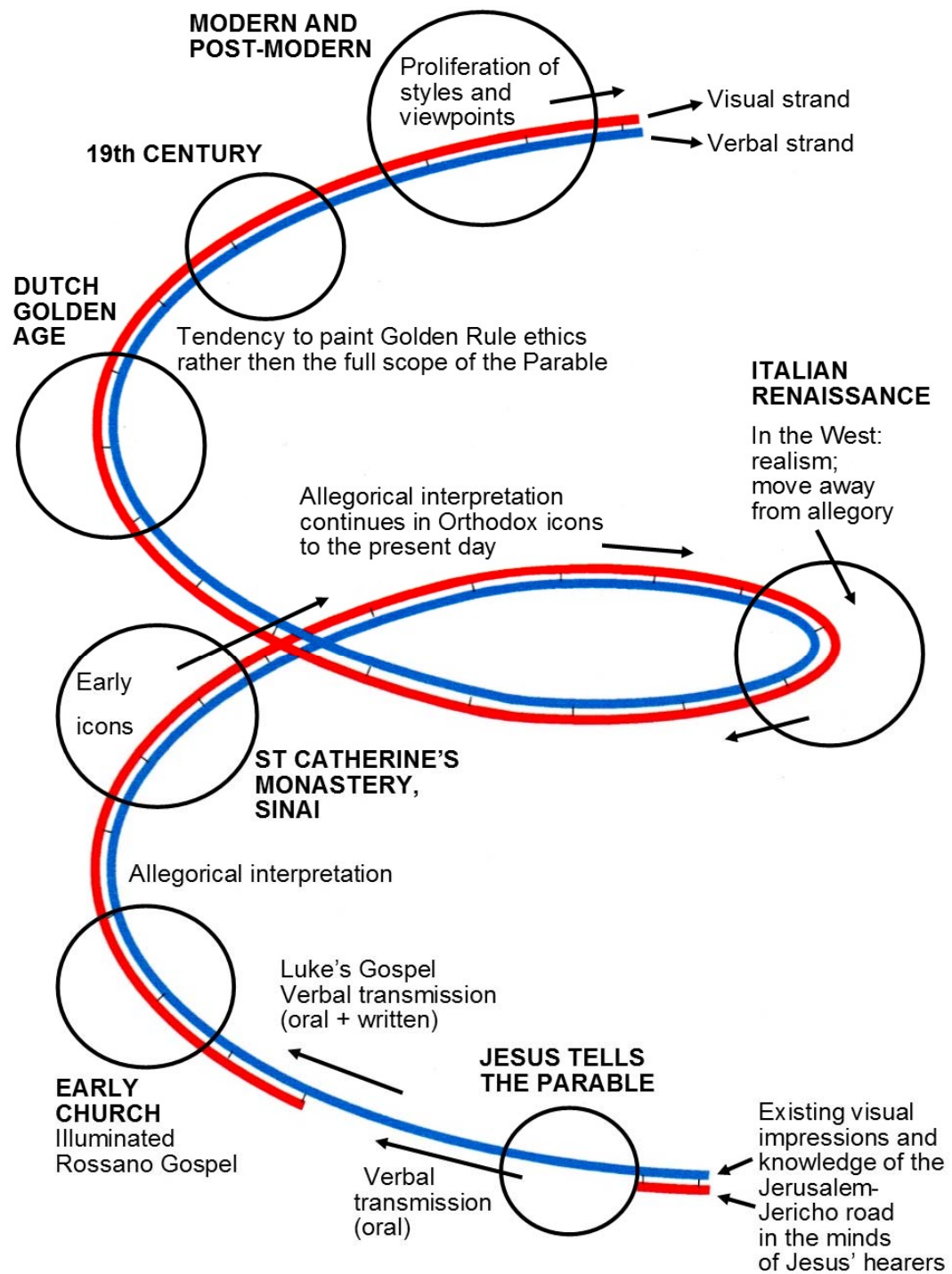


Figure 4.3. Paintings of the Parable of the Good Samaritan:  
A Visual-Verbal Chronotope.

As has been pointed out by Ladin (1999, p. 213), precise definitions of the chronotope are lacking in Bakhtin's writings, and Bemong and Borghart (2010, p. 5) point to the resulting 'proliferation of heterogeneous chronotopic approaches to literature and, more generally, culture.' However, it is not the aim for present purposes to enter into a critique of the considerable literature on this subject, but simply to recognise the usefulness of the concept. This usefulness is enlarged by Bakhtin's distinction between 'major chronotopes' and 'other chronotopic values having different degree and scope.' In particular, a major chronotope 'can include within it an unlimited number of minor chronotopes' (Bakhtin 1981, pp. 243, 252). These are called 'local chronotopes' by Ladin (1999, p. 216), a usage which will be continued here. Specific literary examples given for local chronotopes are the encounter on the road, the castle, the parlour or salon, the provincial town and the threshold (Bakhtin 1981, pp. 243-248), all significant for intersections of space and time.

On encountering these concepts for the first time, a connection with Figures 4.1 to 4.3, then under development, became apparent. Originally seen as illustrating the 'chains of transmission' for the three texts under discussion, including 'selected conception environments' of paintings, these Figures can equally be seen as major visual-verbal chronotopes with inclusions of local chronotope examples. In each case the major chronotope is the whole picture of the textual transmission and interpretation both visual and verbal, and the local chronotopes encompass a variety of conception environments, the particular givens of space and time within which paintings are born. For example, the local chronotope of the Italian Renaissance as included in Figure 4.1 has as its spatial dimension central and northern Italy, including significant locations such as the Sistine chapel where Michelangelo painted, or Verrocchio's workshops in Florence where Leonardo trained. Its time dimension is the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, a period of history during which there were significant developments in both art theory and the sciences. An example from Figure 4.2 is Chagall's local chronotope, with its diverse spatial dimension of 'Chagall's places' where his artistic development was

influenced, including the Jewish milieu of Vitebsk and the Louvre in Paris. The time dimension is Chagall's own life-span situated within 20<sup>th</sup> century European history including two world wars. In Figure 4.3 the Dutch Golden Age (Haak 1984, p. 9) refers of course to the spatial dimension of the Netherlands, and the time dimension is the intensely creative 17<sup>th</sup> century.

It may be concluded that such Figures offer a way into the endless visual-verbal hermeneutics of the Bible, because both are spatio-temporal. In phenomenological terms, there is a resonance between Bakhtin's chronotopes and Marion's 'event type' of saturated phenomena.

#### 4.6 Theological Interpretation

Three painters are drawn from the specific local chronotopes identified above in order to investigate possible relationships between paintings and the artists' attitudes to the Bible. In this respect we know most about Marc Chagall, who was born into a pious Hasidic Jewish family in Vitebsk, formerly in the Russian Empire and now in Belarus. He learnt Hebrew and studied the Bible in the *cheder*, or Jewish primary school (Marchesseau 1998, pp. 13 -16), and was very likely to have been influenced by Hasidic mysticism (Kenneally 2013, p. 6). In the guide to the Musée National Message Biblique in Nice, housing his series of Bible paintings, Chagall wrote as follows about his indebtedness to the Bible, and what he says shows that his experience was of saturation:

I have been fascinated by the Bible ever since my earliest childhood. I have always thought of it as the most extraordinary source of poetic inspiration imaginable. That is what I care about most, both in life and in art. The Bible is a synonym for Nature and that is what I have tried to convey [...] As life is an inexorable course towards death, we must enliven it with our own colours of love and hope. Such love gives life its social cohesion and religion its essence. As far as I am concerned, perfection in Art and in life has its source in the Bible, and exercises in the mechanics of the merely rational are fruitless.

(Chagall 1983, trans. Delahaye 1997, cited by Marchesseau 1998, pp. 148-149).

Notwithstanding Chagall's natural focus on the Hebrew Scriptures and the permeation of his art with Jewishness, he was wary of being labelled as a 'Jewish artist', preferring a more universal identity (Bohm-Duchen 2013, p. 43), indeed he has been called 'a multicultural phenomenon' (Harshav 2003, p. 2). Nevertheless, Chagall wrote 'it seems to me: If I were not a Jew (with the content I put into that word), I wouldn't have been an artist, or I would be a different artist altogether' (Chagall 1922, p. 40). He was also forthcoming about mysticism, taking a broad view; and expressed his interest in dreams and imagination:

"Mystic!" How often have people hurled this word at me - just as they had accused me earlier of being "literary." But without a mystical element is there a single great picture, a single great poem, or - even - a single great social movement in the world? [...] But we should distinguish between different kinds of mysticism, and this war through which we have just passed should have the final purpose of insuring victory over a misconceived mysticism, exploited for evil, cruel and one-sided - the mysticism of the enemy [...] We are interested in everything, not only in the external world, but also in the inner world of dream and imagination. (Chagall 1946, p. 75).

Three of the areas raised above are taken further in subsequent chapters. First, the concept of misconceived mysticism is relevant to the subject of war, as is implied by Chagall, and will be included in Section 5.6 on the art of the First World War. Second, the suggestion that great pictures require a mystical element is reminiscent of the words of the English art historian Herbert Read (1893-1968), who though he suffered from lack of religious faith, said towards the end of his life: 'All my life I have found more sustenance in the work of those who bear witness to the reality of a living God than in the work of those who deny God' (cited by his son P.P. Read 1999). This is an addition to the accumulating strands addressing the question of what is good or authentic art, which will be brought together in Section 8.2. The third area touched on above, namely the role of the imagination, will be elaborated in Section 8.5.

Turning to the seventeenth-century Dutch Golden Age, Rembrandt was brought up in a Dutch Reformed Protestant family, but as a young adult

became impatient with religious orthodoxy (Durham 2004, pp. 55-56). He later associated with various religious and other groups:

...we cannot construct any "system" from Rembrandt's choice of subjects or his handling of them. Nor could this be expected. He was a painter and not a theologian. He went his own way, which does not mean that he ruled out any stimulus he might receive from his acquaintance with members of the Reformed, the Remonstrant, the Mennonite, the Catholic, the Jewish, or the humanist community. One thing only is certain: he lived with his Bible. He was in truth '*homo unius libri*'. ('t Hooft 1957, pp. 29-30).

In the absence of a written record it is difficult to trace the development of his beliefs, but the importance of the Bible in his life as suggested above is reflected in the themes of his paintings. About a third of his works is devoted to biblical subjects, a much greater proportion than his contemporaries (Gasque 2009).

From the Italian Renaissance, the evidence of his own art and writing as presented in Section 4.2 indicates that Leonardo da Vinci was primarily influenced by nature. The question has been asked 'was Leonardo a Christian?' because the first edition of *Vasari's Lives of the Italian Artists* (1550) contained the following observation, which was 'mysteriously' omitted in subsequent editions (Keller 2006): 'Leonardo formed in his mind a conception so heretical as not to approach any religion whatsoever [...] perhaps he esteemed being a philosopher much more than being a Christian.' However, Kemp (2007, pp. 338-339) argues that whilst Leonardo rejected some practices and beliefs of the church of his time, he did acknowledge a creative ultimate cause beyond human comprehension. Such a deist position is consistent with the proposal that Leonardo experienced nature (including the human body) as a saturated phenomenon. This does not rule out the possibility that he was also struck, in a phenomenologically saturated way, by particular texts in the Bible including the deluge account; but it may also be that the biblically-derived titles of some of his artworks came to him from the cultural climate of his time.

Chagall's vibrant colours and juxtaposition of motifs, Rembrandt's inculturation of scenes into the Netherlands, and Leonardo's fascination with



spirals, vortices, and extreme nature, contrast with the work of artists who attempt simply to illustrate Biblical texts. For example, Tissot's *Le Bon Samaritain* illustrates part of Jesus' parable with as much historical and geographical accuracy as the painter could muster. Paintings such as those by Rembrandt, Watanabe, Janknegt and others go a step further by transposing scenes into different landscapes and cultures. However, they may still be seen as attempts to illustrate the text, albeit in ways which render it more accessible to people in different environments. Even further, some images may illustrate theologians' interpretations of the text, or in some case the artists' own interpretations.

These possibilities have been encountered in previous sections. For example, Gregory of Nyssa goes well beyond the original biblical text in his written interpretation of Moses and the Burning Bush, in which the bush is seen as a prefiguration of the virgin birth. Artistic illustrations of this interpretation were common during the medieval period and have continued to the present day in Orthodox icons. Moreover, sometimes artists have combined this with other elements, a notable example being Nicolas Froment in his 15<sup>th</sup> century tempera painting *The Burning Bush*. Reflecting the medieval cult of Mary, she is holding the Christ Child and is encircled by flaming rose bushes with white flowers; a symbol of purity. The angel in the foreground, more like an angel of the Annunciation than the angel of Exodus 3: 2, is wearing a medallion depicting Adam and Eve with the serpent and the Tree of Knowledge, a symbol of the Fall. The Christ Child is holding a mirror of similar size, reflecting Mary and himself, a symbol of Salvation (Harris 1938, pp. 283-285). Hence the painting is conflating Gregory of Nyssa's hermeneutics, medieval symbolism, and Pauline theology in which Christ is the new Adam (e.g. 1 Corinthians 15: 21-22), all combined and elaborated by Froment's imagination.

More recently, and according to Ware (2013, p. 89), the Orthodox Church's understanding of the text is that 'Moses does not simply meet God, but he meets Christ. All the theophanies in the Old Testament are manifestations not of God the Father - Whom "no one has ever seen" (John 1:18) - but of

the preincarnate Christ, God the eternal Logos.’ However, what is striking about most of the burning bush images mentioned is that Christ appears as a baby and it is Mary’s image which is larger and which therefore attracts attention, indeed Shawkat Seif Sadek’s modern icon does not include the Christ Child at all. Is Mary being deified? In the face of controversy within Orthodoxy, such a tendency was refuted as follows ‘One should not revere the saints above what is proper, but should revere their Master. Mary is not God, and did not receive a body from heaven, but from the joining of man and woman...’ (Maximovitch 2012, p. 54). However, the popularity of a female image for such a long time may be revelatory in that it is pointing to a substantial subject which can only be mentioned briefly here - an unspoken and perhaps sometimes subconscious dissatisfaction with exclusively male concepts of God. In this respect, perhaps visual hermeneutics can be seen as reflecting revelation beyond the original text, a possibility endorsed by Brown as follows:

Consistency with the historical narrative is important, but not, it seems to me, decisive. For if, as the Christian believes, Jesus is still alive, then the question has ceased to be merely what he did in the past, but how his presence and influence can be appropriated in the here and now. A better imaginative relation between believer and Lord, greater coherence to the story and so forth, all then become relevant questions. The possibility is even there that, because later generations can open up new perspectives undreamed of in the first century, this new, imaginative narrative may provide a critique of key aspects of the historical narrative [...] we may observe here in passing that the process is already at work in the alterations the evangelists make to the words and actions of Jesus which they have inherited. It should also be noted that the point does not just apply to the life of Christ, but to the narratives of Scripture as a whole, including those that are purely fictional. If we accept that new insights can become available to later generations, then all this was to be expected, with the imagination not resting content with the same version of the narrative for all time, and that is exactly what we find both within Scripture and beyond. (Brown 1999, p. 25).

The historical emergence of Theotokos of the Unburnt Bush icons provides one example of the imaginative process described by Brown; another is provided by the depictions of compassionate humanity in the face of the Deluge, by Michelangelo and John Martin. As described in Section 4.2, Carlisle (2011) and his students saw Martin’s work as a radical ‘secular’ challenge to the Genesis view about humanity’s thoroughgoing evil, but in

Brown's terms, it is a revelatory visual critique of the historical narrative. In this case, it is also a critique which begins in the New Testament, for Jesus' three related parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son (Luke chapter 15) show a God who, in contrast to Genesis 7, goes to extreme lengths to search out and reclaim lost humanity. A third example is the portrayal of the Good Samaritan as an alien, in the presence of whom a wounded and helpless person may well cower in fear. The visual exegeses of Solis and Thurman described in Section 4.4 incline the viewer to identify with the victim, in contrast to the contemporary prevailing interpretation of identification with the Samaritan. In this respect the artworks may be seen as a corrective, challenging 'our own proud self-conception' (Pickett 2012) by recapturing the traditional allegorical interpretation.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE SECOND SPIRAL (2): TERRIBLE GIVENS FROM HUMANITY'S DARK SIDE, EXEMPLIFIED BY THE FIRST WORLD WAR

#### 5.1 Art of the First World War

The second spiral in *The Three Spirals* model includes areas of darkness as well as rainbow colours, recognizing that Popper's World 3 must be the arena in which manifestations of human evil arise as well as glorious achievements in the arts and sciences. The First World War has been chosen to explore the dark side of givenness, with work on this chapter following an August 2014 event at a local military establishment, the Nesscliffe Training Camp, Shropshire. This was to commemorate the outbreak of the war, and as part of the church's contribution I produced a large exhibition of reproductions of war artworks from several of the countries involved. The diversity included propaganda posters; scenes of conflict on land, at sea and in the air; weaponry; devastated landscapes; life in the trenches; casualties and hospitals; the home front; and reflective material including scenes of German lamentation. For the purposes of this chapter the abundance of material will be tackled in two ways, first a close look at two major painters, and second a broader exploration of some recurring themes. The two painters chosen for detailed analysis are Paul Nash (1889-1946) and Stanley Spencer (1891-1959), the former producing 'the most impressive paintings and graphic works made by any British artist during the conflict' and the latter 'the greatest of all British memorials to the First World War: Spencer's painted chapel at Burghclere' (Cork 1994, pp. 196, 296). Phenomenological analysis will look at Marion's specific references to the First World War, together with concepts of the technological and apocalyptic sublime. Theological interpretation will include the significance of the biblical themes of prophecy and hope, and the relevance of Wink's work on the fallen powers.

## 5.2 The war paintings of Paul Nash

Paul Nash studied at the Slade School of Art, having already come under the influence of William Blake, Samuel Palmer, and the Pre-Raphaelites during his earlier artistic education (Haycock 2014, p. 8). He was 'gaining a modest reputation as a painter of neo-Romantic nocturnes and visionary landscapes' (Gough 2010, p. 133) when he joined the Artists' Rifles, a volunteer army reserve, in 1914, writing 'Every man must do his bit in this horrible business so I have given up painting [...] to take up the queer business of soldiering' (Abbott and Bertram 1955, p. 74). He was subsequently selected for officer training, served in the Hampshire Regiment, and was sent to St Eloi near Ypres on the Western Front in February 1917 (Cork 1994, p. 196). His letters home to his wife Margaret (Nash 1949, pp. 179-211) give vivid accounts of what he saw and how he was affected, so give invaluable insights into his work.

During his first period of service on the Western Front from February 1917, the letters convey a sense of invigoration, heightened awareness, and a keen appreciation of the beauty and resilience of nature. During this time Nash sent home numerous drawings, passed by the censor as 'having no military importance', and envisaged as a lifetime's 'food for painting' (Nash 1949, pp. 187, 194). However, time at the Front was short, as he was sent back to London at the end of May 1917 to have a broken rib treated, thereby missing an attack which shortly afterwards killed most of his fellow officers (Gough 2010, p. 147). It needs to be borne in mind that during his three month's service Nash was not involved in any major engagement, indeed Cork (1994, p. 196) speculates that he may not even have encountered a corpse. In other words, when the following letter extracts were written little had yet happened to shatter his exhilaration:

...we have just come up to the trenches for a time and where I sit now in the reserve line the place is just joyous, the dandelions are bright gold over the parapet and nearby a lilac bush is breaking into bloom; in a wood passed through on our way up, a place with an evil name, pitted and pocked with shells the trees torn to shreds, often reeking with poison gas - a most desolate ruinous place two months back, today it was a vivid green; the most

broken trees even had sprouted somewhere and in the midst, from the depth of the wood's bruised heart poured out the throbbing song of a nightingale. (Nash 1949, p. 187).

I feel very happy these days, in fact, I believe I am happier in the trenches than anywhere out here. It sounds absurd, but life has a greater meaning here and a new zest, and beauty is more poignant. I never feel dull or careless, always alive to the significance of nature who, under these conditions, is full of surprises for me. (Nash 1949, p. 189).

The last week has been one so full that I have literally been unable to write. My inner excitement and exultation was so great that I have lived in a cloud of thought these last days [...] Oh, these wonderful trenches at night, at dawn, at sundown! Shall I ever lose the picture they have made in my mind? (Nash 1949, p. 194).

Twilight quivers above, shrinking into night, and a perfect crescent moon sits uncannily below pale stars. As the dark gathers, the horizon brightens and again vanishes as the Very lights rise and fall, shedding their weird greenish glare over the land [...] So night falls gradually [...] At intervals we send up Very lights, and the ghastly face of No Man's Land leaps up in the garish light, then, as the rocket falls, the great shadows flow back shutting it into darkness again [...] Maybe you can feel something of the weird beauty from this little letter. (Nash 1949, p. 196).

During his leave, Nash exhibited eighteen small drawings in London; these were well received and led to his appointment as an official war artist (Gough 2010, pp. 149-150). In November 1917 he was back in France in this capacity, and, overcoming official resistance (Nash 1949, p. 216) eventually had an opportunity to visit what had recently been the front line at the Battle of Passchendaele. This battle was infamous for its human cost, 325,000 Allied and 260,000 German casualties, and also for the mud (BBC 2014). Nash's brief notes record 'Adventures in Passchendaele. I draw the German Front line. The Menin Road. The mule track. Sunrise at Inverness Copse. About noon I get back to H.Q.' (Nash 1949, p. 216). On 16 November he wrote to Margaret the following often-quoted words:

I have just returned, last night, from a visit to Brigade Headquarters up the line, and I shall not forget it as long as I live. I have seen the most frightful nightmare of a country more conceived by Dante or Poe than by nature, unspeakable, utterly indescribable. In the fifteen drawings I have made I may give you some vague idea of its horror, but only being in it and of it can ever make you sensible of its dreadful nature and of what our men in France have to face [...] Evil and the incarnate fiend alone can be master of this war, and no glimmer of God's hand is seen anywhere. Sunrise and sunset are blasphemous, they are mockeries to man, only the black rain out of the

bruised and swollen clouds all through the bitter black of night is fit atmosphere in such a land. The rain drives on, the stinking mud becomes more evilly yellow, the shell holes fill up with green-white water, the roads and tracks are covered in inches of slime, the black dying trees ooze and sweat and the shells never cease. They alone plunge overhead, tearing away the rotting tree stumps, breaking the plank roads, striking down horses and mules, annihilating, maiming, maddening, they plunge into the grave which is this land; one huge grave, and cast up on it the poor dead. It is unspeakable, godless, hopeless. I am no longer an artist interested and curious, I am a messenger who will bring back word from the men who are fighting to those who want the war to go on for ever. Feeble, inarticulate will be my message, but it will have a bitter truth, and may it burn their lousy souls. (Nash 1949, pp. 210-211).

Nash's eyes had been opened, his anger aroused, and he had identified himself as a messenger. In biblical terms, this is the language of prophets, and this connection is discussed further in Section 5.6.

Returning to England in December 1917, Nash worked intensely on a second exhibition, *The Void of War*, which took place at the Leicester Galleries in London, May 1918. Analysing in more detail the processes leading to this 'extraordinarily powerful show' (Gough 2010, p. 153), it may be noted that before the war he had shown a number of interests and these remained with him during his maturation as a painter. First, foreshadowing themes of conflict in his war paintings, was his 1910 ink and wash drawing of *The Combat*, also called *Angel and Devil* (Nash 1910). He recollected this shortly before he died: 'One of my first imaginative drawings was of a combat on a wild hill-top. An angel fought a devil [...] the demon has a hawk's face and feathered wings, but a man's body and legs' (Nash 1947, p. 3). Accompanying this work was some of Nash's own verse, including the lines 'A place of gibbet-shapen trees & black abyss; Where gaunt hills brooded dark and evil [...] A dread place seen only in dreams' (V & A 2015c). William Blake's influence has been seen in this 'confrontation of good and evil' (Causey 2013, p. 15). Second, as hinted at in the above verse, there is his feeling for trees: 'I have tried [...] to paint trees as tho they were human beings [...] I sincerely love & worship trees & know they are people & wonderfully beautiful people' (Nash 1912, cited by Abbott and Bertram 1955, p. 42, Nash's italics). Examples of pre-war tree artworks are

*Landscape with a Large Tree* (Nash 1912a) and *The Three* (Nash 1912b).

Third, within his experiments with imaginative drawings in general, he had a particular interest in night scenes, for example *The Pyramids in the Sea* (Nash 1912c) and *The Cliff to the North* (Nash 1912d).

the domain of the sky, with its normal or imaginary inhabitants, was a preoccupation of my early drawings, and night was my favourite time for their portrayal. (Nash 1947, pp. 2-3).

So I began some 'imaginative' landscapes indoors, they went most damnably wrong [...] At last I nearly wept [...] but returned soon to my board and suddenly did a queer drawing of pyramids crashing about in the sea in uncanny eclipsed moonlight...

(Nash 1912, cited by Abbott and Bertram 1955, p. 48).

Nash's earlier exhibition *Ypres Salient* at the Goupil Gallery, London 1917, reflects some of these interests together with his first period of service at the Western Front and the fact that this happened to be a relatively quiet time.

These considerations are exemplified in *Chaos Decoratif* (Nash 1917a), which combine the spikiness of war-torn trees and the angles of duckboards and a ladder with the greenness of ground vegetation and leafy branches.

*The Ridge, Wytschaete* (Nash 1917b) has similar characteristics.

Reminiscent of some of Nash's observations in his letters to Margaret, here is a representation of his joy in nature's recuperative powers. *Chaos Decoratif* is executed in ink, pencil and watercolour; *The Ridge, Wytschaete* in black ink and coloured chalk. These had been his preferred media until his second exhibition, *The Void of War*; it was only then that he tried oil painting. He records in his notes: 'Exhibition arranged for May at the Leicester Galleries. Life in London [...] I begin to paint in oils' (Nash 1949, pp. 216-217).

Five oil paintings were shown in *The Void of War*, including *Void* (Nash 1918a), *The Mule Track* (Nash 1918c) and the ironically named *We are Making a New World* (Nash 1918e). The use of oils, conveying greater density of colour than watercolours, helps contribute to the impact of these paintings; and indeed to subsequent works such as *The Menin Road* (Nash 1918-1919a). Also exhibited were five lithographs and original drawings to a



total of fifty-six artworks (Gough 2010, p. 153). This exhibition marked a profound transformation in Nash's work, traceable to the shock of his most recent experiences as described to Margaret.

A contemporary reaction to the artworks is to be found in the exhibition catalogue, in which the novelist Arnold Bennett wrote the following:

The interpretative value is, to my mind, immense. Lieutenant Nash has seen the Front simply and largely. He has found the essentials of it - that is to say, disfigurement, danger, desolation, ruin, chaos - and little figures of men creeping devotedly and tragically over the waste. The convention he uses is ruthlessly selective. The wave-like formations of shell-holes, the curves of shell-bursts, the straight lines and sharply-defined angles of wooden causeways, decapitated trees, and the fangs of obdurate masonry, the weight of heavy skies, the human pawns of battle [...] But no one could explain the emotional force of the artistic individuality which has made these pictures what they are. They seem to me to have been done in a kind of rational and dignified rage, in a restrained passion of resentment at the spectacle of what men suffer, in a fierce determination to transmit to the beholder the full true horror of war [...] But they are more than educational. Their supreme achievement is that in their sombre and dreadful savagery they are beautiful. (Bennett 1918).

*Void* depicts a dark devastated largely deserted landscape, with military action confined to the far distance - exploding shells, an aeroplane apparently falling to the ground, and minute figures of soldiers retreating along a duckboard. Much of the painting is filled with the debris of war, such as a damaged lorry, spilled ammunition, broken duckboards, and broken trees. There is a flattened corpse pressed into the road, and the slanting rain pours down from a black, grey and yellow sky. The shapes are angular with strong diagonals, relating to Bennett's above-quoted 'convention' understood as simplifications of form and geometrical emphases reflecting Cubism and Futurism (Read 1944, p. 9; Gough 2010, p. 155).

In his description of the painting, Cork (1994, pp. 200-201) speculates that the idea of the void may have come from William Blake, who had been admired by Nash for many years. Cork points specifically at the second book of *Milton*, where Ololon asks:

O Immortal! how were we led to war the wars of death?  
 Is this the void outside of existence, which if entered into  
 Becomes a womb, & is this the death-couch of Albion?  
 Thou goest to eternal death, & all must go with thee.  
 (Blake 1971, p. 564. Composed c. 1800-1804, engraved c. 1809).

and also at *Tiriel*, a 'gruelling' poem for which Nash had produced three illustrations in September 1917. Nash mentions doing a design for *Tiriel* in a letter to Margaret dated 27<sup>th</sup> September 1917 (Tate 1983). Visions of destruction in the poem include:

Rise from the centre belching flames and roarings,  
     dark smoke.  
 Where art thou, pestilence that bathest in fogs and  
     standing lakes?  
 Rise up thy sluggish limbs, and let the loathsome of  
     poisons  
 Drop from thy garments as thou walkest. Wrapped in  
     yellow clouds  
 Here take thy seat in this wide court; let it be strown  
     with dead...

(Blake 1971, p. 87. Poem assigned a date of 1788-1789).

The exhibition's devastated landscapes continued with *The Mule Track* and *We are Making a New World*, which may be looked at with the benefit of drawings held by the Imperial War Museum. Their conception may be seen in Nash's Passchendaele notes quoted above, where he records that among other things he drew the *Mule Track* and *Sunrise at Inverness Copse*. Causey (2013, p. 41) points out that Nash's drawings at this time were started on site and 'developed within a few days at regional headquarters while scenes were fresh in his mind.' Viewing the oil paintings side by side with the worked-up drawings shows how Nash made changes in composition and colouring to maximise dramatic effect in the paintings.

The *Sketch, Mule Track* (Nash 1918b) is in watercolour and ink and of an overall brownish grey appearance. Two stooped soldiers in the foreground are making their way along a duckboard against a background of shell-bursts, flying debris and broken trees. In comparison, the finished painting *The Mule Track* has a much greater contrast of dark and light, with areas of blackness and with light coming from explosions and the spurting up of

water from shells hitting the flooded trenches. The clouds of smoke in the background are grey, white and chemical yellow; and the foreground soldiers have been replaced by smaller men and mules in the middle distance, the mules rearing up in panic. As with *Void*, the shapes are angular with strong diagonals.

*Sunrise, Inverness Copse* (Nash 1918d) is the drawing which formed the basis for *We are Making a New World*, possibly the 'most acclaimed' work in the exhibition (Gough 2010, p. 157); Nash's 'Opus 1' (Jenkins 2010, p. 11). The drawing was worked up in watercolour, ink and chalk, and like the mule track sketch is of an overall brownish grey appearance. The scene is dominated by splintered trees and heavily pitted mud, and a whitish sun rises in a grey-blue sky. Unusually among Nash's war paintings, the composition and shapes in *We are Making a New World* correspond quite accurately to this original sketch (Causey 2013, p. 48); but the colouring has changed. Again there is a greater contrast between light and dark, with sunlight just catching the sides of the trees, the tops of the heaps of mud, and the edge of the heavy clouds above which the sun is rising. The clouds are dark red-brown, like the colour of dried blood, and the mud has a greenish tinge. The composition can be seen as symbolic, with Nash conveying 'the horror of human carnage by focusing on the withered stumps rising so mournfully from the ground no longer capable of nourishing their roots' (Cork 1994, p. 202).

Nash's war paintings have been described as 'images that would endure as among the most sublime and terrifying and beautiful ever made of the Western Front' (Haycock 2014, p. 30) - the concept of 'sublime' in this context will be discussed further in Section 5.5. However, in the summer of 1918 he was denied a second tour of duty as a war artist; and 'without renewed war experience he was not able to keep the demons to the fore' (Causey 2013, p. 49). His last war painting was *A Night Bombardment* (Nash 1918-1919b), a 'funereal' landscape (Cork 1994, p. 236) with dark pools and slime, war debris, shattered trees and no human figures. His notes record 'Struggles of a war artist without a war [...] New life in a different world. New

kinds of work [...] New inspiration' (Nash 1949, p. 218). How different was the trajectory followed by Stanley Spencer! It was only after prolonged post-war gestation, with continued returning to memories of the whole of his war experience, that his painted chapel was completed in 1932.

### 5.3 The Sandham Memorial Chapel paintings of Stanley Spencer

Stanley Spencer was a fellow student with Nash at the Slade School of Art, and by 1913 'was developing an unassailable personal vision, which fused religious exultation with a unique sense of place' (Gough 2006, p. 23). Apart from the Slade he had known little of life outside his home village of Cookham in Berkshire until his war service. His brother Gilbert said they knew they would have to volunteer to avoid losing 'their manhood', also that Stanley did not seem to fear danger, but boredom. 'Boredom frightened him more than anything in the world' (G. Spencer 1991, pp. 135-136). Stanley joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and served first at the Beaufort Military Hospital, a converted asylum in Bristol, then in Macedonia with a Field Ambulance Unit and an infantry unit (Gough 2010, p. 245). As with Nash, his prolific letters and notes help us to understand his work.

In the care of the National Trust, the Sandham Memorial Chapel in the Hampshire village of Burghclere has three of its great walls covered with Spencer's oil paintings on canvas, produced between 1927 and 1932. At the east end behind the altar is *The Resurrection of the Soldiers*, over five metres wide and six metres high (Bradley and Watson 2013, p. 89). To the north and south each wall has eight panels, the four lower being rectangular and the four upper having curved tops. These draw from the whole of Spencer's wartime experience, with the lower panels showing scenes from the Beaufort Hospital such as *Scrubbing the Floor* and *Bedmaking*; and the upper mainly from Macedonia, for example *Reveille* and *Map-Reading*. Above the upper row of panels filling the space between them and the ceiling, are paintings extending the full length of each wall: *Camp at Karasuli* to the north and *Riverbed at Todorovo* to the south. Complete sets of

reproductions are available in Bradley and Watson (2013) and in Gough (2006), and at <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/place/sandham-memorial-chapel>.

Spencer started work at the Beaufort Hospital in July 1915, and subsequently applied for overseas service (Gough 2006, pp. 32, 50). Bound for Macedonia, he wrote to his friend Desmond Chute in 'August 1916 on ship', enthusing about what he was seeing of the North African coast and with the letter including drawings of ships and coastal hills (Gough 2011, pp. 97-99). His brother Gilbert tells us that in Salonica Stanley was always 'up the line', often in great danger, and was in the final advance, going 'over the top' (Spencer 1991, pp. 143-144). He returned home in November 1918, his repatriation accelerated because of serious malaria (Gough 2010, p. 265). The Chapel at Burghclere was commissioned in 1924 by John Louis and Mary Behrend as a memorial to Mary's brother Lieutenant Henry Willoughby Sandham, the architect Lionel Pearson worked to a small-scale drawing by Spencer (G. Spencer 1991, p. 145), and the chapel was dedicated by the Bishop of Guildford in 1927.

From a more detailed analysis, it can be seen that the journey which led to these Chapel paintings began well before the war. During his time as a distinguished Slade student, and in pre-war Cookham, Spencer produced several notable paintings, using oils as well as a variety of other media. *Two Girls and a Beehive* (Spencer 1910), identified as his 'first important painting' by Carline (1980, p. 11) was retrospectively described by Spencer as marking his 'becoming conscious of the rich religious significance of the place I lived in. My feeling for things being holy was very strong at this time' (Spencer, cited by Bell 1980, p. 39). The figure of Christ can be seen faintly in the background partially obscured by a bush; some later paintings similarly included Christ, disciples or prophets (Bell 1980, p. 39). Explicitly religious early paintings include *John Donne Arriving in Heaven* (Spencer 1911), *The Nativity* (Spencer 1912), *Joachim Among the Shepherds*

(Spencer 1913), and *Zacharias and Elizabeth* (Spencer 1913-1914), all set in Cookham environments.

Stanley's brother Gilbert, having mentioned some of these early works, helps us to understand the processes through which they were produced:

He read a lot for these pictures, he soaked himself in their stories, and he thought about them much on his walks [...] On his walks around the village he would be peopling it with his thoughts and ideas. And the village was making its own strange contribution, in interaction [...] We know that when he was occupied with an idea it was with him at all times, and he rejected or selected material as though he were out shopping [...] Stan nursed his ideas and reared them among his books, on his walks and searchings, until his excitement, which was concealed from us by his outwardly natural manner, knew no bounds. Then his canvases received these ideas as though it was the end and not the beginning of his journey. They seemed to explode from the canvases. But at his side were the drawings which were the first fruits of his ideas: these he squared on to the canvas, faintly at first, and with light sepia washes brought them to life.

Having got to the point where he was ready to start the painting, he followed a precise method which appeared to be his own and was akin to the methods of fresco painting. He always started at the top. First he painted the sky and the landscape, then the buildings and any part of a man-made background, and left the figures to the last. (G. Spencer 1991, pp. 112-115).

The above techniques are still in evidence many years later in studies for the Sandham Memorial Chapel north and south walls, reproduced in Martin (2013, p. 58). These studies were produced around 1923, are done in wash on paper, and the paper is squared. Other studies in pencil produced at this time for individual wall panels include *Sketch for Dug-out* and *Study for Firebelt*; and the final studies for *The Resurrection of the Soldiers* were made around 1927 (Bradley and Watson 2013, pp. 85, 89, 103, 106).

At the Beaufort Hospital Spencer was catapulted into a regime of long hours, hard menial work, and very little time and space to himself. He wrote to his friends Jacques and Gwen Raverat 'When I am ready for the Kingdom of Heaven, I shall tell God to take into consideration the number of men I have cleaned & the amount of *floors* I have *scrubbed*' (Spencer 1915, cited by Glew 2001, p. 65, Spencer's italics). The way in which Spencer understood and coped with his duties was greatly influenced by the already-mentioned

Desmond Chute, young local Bristolian and Roman Catholic, later to become a priest (Gough 2006, pp. 46-47). With artistic interests of his own, and having heard that the Stanley Spencer who exhibited paintings in London was currently working at the Beaufort, he came visiting:

he was terribly good & kind to me [ ...] he could see as well as I that I merely wanted a way of meeting my experiences so that they would have some meaning for me [ ...] My civilian friend told me to read [St.] Augustine's 'Confessions' & in it there is glorifying God in all His different performances. This struck me very much.<sup>15</sup> 'What art thou, my God [ ...] Ever busy yet ever at rest. Gathering yet never needing, bearing, filling, guarding, creating, nourishing, perfecting, seeking though thou hast no lack.' And so I thought, 'bearing, filling', coming, going, fetching, carrying, sorting, opening doors, shutting them, carrying tea urns, scrubbing floors, etc. Yes, he was a friend indeed. (Spencer 1915, cited by Glew 2001, pp. 62-63).

It seems, then, that reading Augustine helped Spencer to see God in the most menial of duties, and through them even to align himself with God's activity. The meaning which Spencer found here was eventually to shine through in the Sandham Memorial paintings.

Because of the pressure of his duties, Spencer drew relatively little at the Beaufort, though he does record 'I tried to draw a patient yesterday: I only did it because he begged me to, he has a fine head' (Spencer 1915, cited by Glew 2001, p. 61); and he did make line drawings on some of his letters (Gough 2006, pp. 49-50). However, from his daily work he was committing a wealth of images to his 'cavernous, indexical memory' (Gough 2006, p. 43); and began seeing these as paintings. At Tweseldown Camp in 1916, training before his overseas service, he wrote to Chute 'I am looking back on 'Beaufort' days & now that I am away from the worry of it I must do some pictures of it - frescoes' (Spencer 1916, cited by Gough 2011, p. 94).

Years later at the Sandham Memorial Chapel there would emerge from Spencer's memory such details as the wallpaper and bedcover patterns in *Bedmaking* and the hessian aprons and red bath tubs in *Washing Lockers*.

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<sup>15</sup> The relevant section of St Augustine's *Confessions* is Book 1, section 4.

More was involved in this process than mental storage and subsequent reproduction of visual information, for when he was 'home', that is when he had a period of peace and time for himself, there were re-livings, imaginings of pictures, and spiritual transformations. For example, hospital buckets carried over the arms of an orderly in *Frostbite* are on the one hand detailed depictions of buckets as he remembered them; and on the other hand they show us the orderly as an angel because the buckets can be seen as wings. Spencer's understanding of what he was doing is recorded in one of his notebooks:

I have a sort of heaven in which I need to re-live these parts or imagined pictures. I am only interested in this world in so far as it assists or is useable as a means of my expressing & revealing this other heaven world. In the men & women of the last war I felt, as I felt in myself, that there was some sort of peace in dwelling: one had pantechniconised one's 'home', carried it about with one.

(Spencer 1945-1947, cited by Glew 2001, p. 104).

In these words Spencer goes further than his reaction in the Beaufort Hospital to St Augustine's Confessions, and seems to be identifying his painting work as a channel for revelation. As for what he is trying to reveal, it is reminiscent of Jesus' words in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:10), about God's kingdom coming on earth. Like Nash, Spencer may be seen as a prophet, but conveying visual messages of hope and redemption as discussed in more detailed biblical terms in Section 5.6.

*En route* to the Field Ambulance Unit in Macedonia, Spencer was 'entranced' by the landscapes he was passing through, seeing them as existing in 'a spiritual world' (Spencer 1916, cited by Glew 2001, p. 77). His duties included evacuating casualties to the dressing stations, involving transferring them from stretchers to mule-drawn mountain sledges known as travoys, and then supporting them on their jolting journeys. He also did much menial work, fetching and carrying, cleaning mess tins, digging drainage gutters and burning fire-breaks round camp sites (Gough 2006, pp. 67-68, 72). He found time to draw, and experiences from this time fuelled longings



and ideas for paintings which were to materialise in the Sandham Memorial Chapel:

November 1916, to Desmond Chute from Salonica. Oh how I long to paint! A man told me that Malta possesses many old churches full of frescoes [...] When this man told me this I began to long. (Cited by Gough 2011, p. 102).

May 1918, to Desmond Chute from Salonica. I shall be able to show God in the bare 'real' things, in a limber wagon in ravines, in fowling mule lines. I shall not forget what you said about God "Fetching & carrying" it was something like that out of St Augustine's Confessions. (Cited by Gough 2011, p. 116).

June 1918, to Henry Lamb from Salonica. I am aching to paint ideas I have for men asleep in a tent, that bivouac idea I showed to you. Of men at drinking water [...] 2 pack mule pictures. A picture of a lecture on Mosquitoes. 2 mule line pictures. A picture of one limber wagon bringing grub [...] I want to do some 'ravine' picture...(Cited by Glew 2001, p. 92).

His ideas developed further after the war, especially in 1922 when Spencer went on a painting expedition to Yugoslavia with the Carline family. He visited places relatively close to his war posting, and following this began to plan in earnest. 'Stanley sits at a table all day evolving acres of Salonica and Bristol war compositions' wrote Henry Lamb whilst Spencer was staying with him in Dorset (Lamb 1923, cited by Martin 2013, p. 59). The compositions included designs for the chapel and the arrangement of wall paintings therein, and it is these which were seen and admired by the Behrends when visiting Lamb, and which inspired their patronage (Martin 2013, p. 59). These plans were reminiscent of Giotto's frescoes, especially those in Padua, drawing upon Spencer's long-term enthusiasm for Giotto and the early Italian Renaissance. As a Slade student in 1911 he had been given a copy of John Ruskin's *Giotto and His Works at Padua*, referring to the frescoes of the Scrovegni Chapel (Martin 2013, pp. 55-56). He wrote to Henry Lamb from Cookham in August 1914, saying 'If I go to war I go on one condition I can have Giotto, The Basilica of Assisi [...] & Fra Angelico in one pocket & Masaccio, Masolino & Giorgione in the other' (Spencer 1914, cited by Glew 2001, p. 50). The theme continues in May 1916, in a letter to Desmond Chute from Tweseldown Camp, Surrey, before embarking for Macedonia: 'The camps & tents make me want to do a big fresco painting

[...] I also have a little book of Giotto & the book of the church of St Francis of Assisi, both books I carry in my pocket or haversack' (Spencer 1916, cited by Gough 2011, p. 78). Here is one of the contributory strands which may be discerned at Burghclere.

It may also be that this familiarity with early Italian paintings lay behind Spencer's intense response to Macedonian landscapes. Gough (2006, p. 67) suggests that what he saw brought into reality the painted Renaissance scenes which he had long cherished. In other words, though what was given through these landscapes was on the one hand strikingly different from what Spencer had been used to at Cookham, on the other hand there was recognition because of features such as hills with steep outcrops of light-coloured rocks, fields, varieties of trees, architectural styles and whitewashed buildings, which appear in the works of Giotto, Masaccio, Masolino and Giorgione. Moreover, given that the work of these painters focused on biblical subjects, it would be a natural step for Spencer to make biblical connections. Earlier, on the troop-ship in the Mediterranean, he had seen an Algerian village 'to the East of a Mighty Rock' and 'it was just like being in the Bible', and then in Macedonia 'It looks just as you might imagine old Bible characters to look, to go through a village & see the labourer returning from his labours in the fields' (Spencer 1916, 1917, cited by Glew 2001, pp. 76, 86). Evocations of Macedonian landscapes, for example in *Map Reading* and *Riverbed at Todorova*, are a second contributory strand from Spencer's experience which may be identified at Burghclere.

A third strand is the concept of 'home', or Spencer's 'sort of heaven', interpreted both as Cookham and as places where he found peace during his war service. A subtle evocation of Cookham at Burghclere has been pointed out by Beddington and Hughes (2013, p. 67) with reference to his painting *Mending Cows, Cookham* (Spencer 1915). The cows in question are wooden constructions which move around with the wind, providing ventilation to the oasthouses where hops are dried. Their distinctive shape re-appears at Burghclere, in *Sorting the Laundry*, *Reveille*, and *Firebelt*, albeit manifested as a large towel, mosquito nets, and a tent respectively.

Moreover, in Cookham Spencer had seen deeper significance in these crows, writing:

They seemed to be always looking at something and somewhere. When they veered round towards us they seemed to be looking at something above our own nursery window [...] With their white wooden heads, they served as reminders of religious presence. (Spencer, cited by Tate 2007).

As for personal spaces where he could find spiritual refreshment, they included the gaps between the Beaufort's deep red bath tubs depicted in *Washing Lockers* (Bradley and Watson 2013, p. 104).

The fourth strand, dominating the Burghclere paintings, is diverse activity, such as *Sorting and Moving Kit-Bags*, *Filling Tea Urns*, and *Reveille*, most of which would have been new experiences for Spencer. Here is part of his experience of war, but what has happened to the other part, namely the terrible injuries he must have seen and tended, both in the Beaufort and in Macedonia; and attending to the dying and the dead? 'When he painted, the horrors and terrors of war never found their way into the finished works' (Beddington and Hughes 2013, pp. 66-67), rather there is an air of calmness and of people 'working together in common cause' (Gough 2006, p. 44). In theological terms, the horrors and terrors have been redeemed, and this interpretation is discussed further in Section 5.6.

## 5.4 A broader spectrum of themes

Considering the overall range of First World War art it would be possible to classify the material in many different ways, but remembering Nash's self-identification as a messenger after the Battle of Passchendaele, a start will be made with the theme of messages. Nash's paintings communicated war's devastation on landscapes rather than people, however others turned their attention to the human cost including Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson (1889-1946) who joined an ambulance unit and was later appointed as an official war artist. In this capacity his earlier paintings were Futurist with an interest in war technology and with soldiers painted in an angular way

reflecting the angles of the weaponry, for example *La Mitrailleuse* (Nevinson 1915a) with its machine gun and crew, however he later changed his approach. His interest in the sacrifices of ordinary soldiers had been aroused, and feeling that the full truth was being denied to audiences at home he turned to a more representational style exemplified by *The Doctor* (Nevinson 1916) and *Paths of Glory* (Nevinson 1917). About *The Doctor*, which shows a wounded soldier in great pain, he wrote that it was expressing ‘an absolutely NEW outlook on the so-called “sacrifice of war”’, and was ‘the last word on the “horror-of-war” for the generations to come’ (Nevinson 1918, cited by Ross 1952, p. 331, Nevinson’s capitals). As for *Paths of Glory*, showing two corpses in the mud, Nevinson included it in an exhibition at the last moment and when permission was then refused by the censors he provocatively pasted brown paper over it on which he wrote ‘Censored’ (Gough 2010, p. 106).

In similar vein from the Central Powers, paintings by Austrian artists Albin Egger-Lienz (1868-1926) and Carry Hauser (1895-1984) both express visually a change of attitude resulting from their military experience. Egger-Lienz’s *War* (1915-16), *The Nameless Ones 1914* (1916), and *Finale* (1918) respectively depict determined soldiers facing outwards and striding across bare land; crouching soldiers advancing with faces turned to the ground; and a mass of brown corpses in the brown mud. Hauser joined the army enthusiastically in 1914 but became ‘disillusioned and then disgusted by his experience...and in 1916 found time to express his condemnation’ (Cork 1994, p. 116). His *Against the War* (Hauser 1916) shows a pallid probably fatally wounded soldier being carried away from the trenches; there is a cross on the skyline.

The German artist Otto Dix (1891-1969) volunteered in 1914 and was a machine-gunner, experiencing bombardment and the realities of trench warfare including being wounded, and saying:

those are all phenomena that I absolutely had to experience [...] I’m not a pacifist at all. Or maybe I was a curious person [...] I have to see everything

with my own eyes in order to confirm that that's the way it is.  
(Dix, cited by Karcher 2010, p. 30).

His paintings during the war years, for example *The Position (Battlefield with Tree)* (Dix 1917a), and *Shell Craters with Tracer Flares* (Dix 1917b), convey impressions of explosions and fragmentation in semi-abstract terms, but he went further after the war. His 51 *War* etchings (Dix 1924) are extremely intensive images, modelled (Van Liere 2015, pp. 18-19) on *The Disasters of War* (Goya 1810-1820), a series of 82 etchings by the Spanish artist Francisco Goya (1746-1828). Dix makes visible the human cost in scenes of injury, death and decomposition, for which he found etching to be technically the best medium for depicting gruesome details, as for example in *Wounded Man*, *Dead Man in Mud*, *Gas Victim*, *Soldier's Grave*, *Corpse on Barbed Wire*, and *Skull*. The series also includes *Skin Graft (Transplantation)*, portraying a grievously disfigured soldier with clumsy surgical reconstruction on one side of his face. This raises the more general subject of the portrayal of disfigurement, and its significance in terms of Marion's phenomenology of the gaze, to be taken up in the next chapter on portraiture.

Subsequently *The War* triptych (Dix 1929-1932) was painted in the form of a medieval altarpiece, a disturbing synthesis of material from the whole of his experience. The left hand panel has soldiers going off to fight, swathed in mist, and the right shows an exhausted Dix returning with a wounded fellow-soldier against a fiery background. The large central panel is dominated by corpses and putrefaction. Dix's comments indicate that a long reflective process had taken place since his earlier war artworks:

The painting was made ten years after the First World War. During these years I had conducted many studies in order to deal with the experience of war in artistic terms. In 1928 I felt mature enough to tackle this major theme, and its presentation occupied me for several years or more. At that time, by the way, many books in the Weimar Republic once more blatantly propagated a form of heroism and a concept of the hero that had long been taken to the point of absurdity in the trenches of the First World War. The people were already beginning to forget what unspeakable suffering the war had brought with it. It was this situation that led to the triptych.

(Dix 1964, cited by Karcher 2010, pp. 44-45).

Dix's account with its complex succession of stages invites analysis of *The War* triptych in terms of the typology proposed in Chapter 2, and the following is proposed. The trajectory of the painting started with a triggering of intentionality [A] in a general way, expressed above as Dix's wish to deal with the givens of his war experience artistically. Given the painful physicality of his experience, it may be speculated that [A] was combined with gut feelings [B]. Thereafter, there was a long gestation period incorporating further givens arising from the preparation of artworks notably his *War* etchings, and associated studies. These probably drew from war photographs by Hugo Erfurth and Ernst Friedrich, and the study of corpses and body parts which Dix obtained from the Friedrichstadt Hospital Pathology Department (Karcher 2010, p. 44). In terms of gestation of the *War* triptych, these can be seen as intermediate stages, a way of returning to source [C]. A further more specific triggering of intentionality [A] arose as a response to the rise of Weimar propaganda and Dix's concern that the suffering was being forgotten. In biblical terms Dix was fulfilling the role of a prophet as discussed in Section 5.6, using visual messages in a way reminiscent of Nash, and like many of the biblical prophets he was rejected - in 1934 the Nazis banned the 'degenerate' Dix from exhibiting his works (Karcher 2010, p. 213).

A different viewpoint of the war comes from those left at home, and the work of German women artists is outstanding in this respect. Sacrifice and lamentation, which are of course biblical themes as discussed in Section 5.6, are depicted in many works including the following by Katharina Heise (1891-1964), Käte Lassen (1880-1956) and Otilie Roederstein (1859-1937): *Funeral Procession* (Heise 1916), *Lamentation* (Heise 1918), *The Widow* (Lassen 1919), and *Grief* (Roederstein c. 1916). Several women artists initially supported the war and were caught up in excitement and optimistic attitudes, for example on 6th August 1914 the painter and printmaker Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945) wrote in her diary 'In these times, I too felt a new beginning within me. It was as if nothing could uphold its former value. Everything had to be estimated anew. I felt able to sacrifice freely' (Kollwitz 1914, cited by Siebrecht 2013, pp. 29-30). However, after the death of her

son Peter on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1914, Kollwitz went on to question sacrifice in the thought-provoking diary entry for 11<sup>th</sup> October 1916:

When I think I am convinced of the insanity of the war, I ask myself again by what law man ought to live. Certainly not in order to attain the greatest possible happiness. It will always be true that life must be subordinated to the service of an ideal. But in this case, where has that principle led us? Peter, Erich, Richard, all have subordinated their lives to the idea of patriotism. The English, Russian and French young men have done the same. The consequence has been this terrible killing, and the impoverishment of Europe. Then shall we say that the youth in all these countries have been cheated? Has their capacity for sacrifice been exploited in order to bring on the war? Where are the guilty? Are there any? Or is everyone cheated? Has it been a case of mass madness? And when and how will the awakening take place?

I shall never fully understand it all. But it is clear that our boys, our Peter, went into the war two years ago with pure hearts, and that they were ready to die for Germany. They died - almost all of them. Died in Germany and among Germany's enemies - by the millions. When the minister blessed the volunteers, he spoke of the Roman youth who leaped into the abyss and so closed it. That was one boy. Each of these boys felt that he must act like that one. But what came of it was something very different. The abyss has not closed. It has swallowed up millions, and it still gapes wide. And Europe, all Europe, is still like Rome, sacrificing its finest and most precious treasure - but the sacrifice has no effect.

(Kollwitz 1916, cited by H. Kollwitz ed. 1988, pp. 73-74).

Later, after struggling with profound depression, Kollwitz agreed to make a poster for a large-scale aid programme in Vienna, and wrote about 'the responsibility of being an advocate' and her 'duty to voice the suffering' (Kollwitz 1920, cited by H. Kollwitz ed. 1988, p. 96). She then went on to produce seven woodcut images comprising her *War* series issued in 1924, saying 'These sheets should travel throughout the entire world and should tell all human beings comprehensively: that is how it was' (Kollwitz 1922, cited by Prelinger 1992, pp. 57-58). The images reflect Kollwitz's own experience by focusing on the anguish of those left behind together with the mother-child relationship, as in *The Sacrifice* (Kollwitz 1922) which shows a mother holding up her dead child.

Beyond Nevinson, Dix and Kollwitz, there is a glimpse of another dimension in *Gassed* (Sargent 1919). John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) was commissioned as a war artist in 1918 notwithstanding his previously

'sheltered' life (Cork 1994, p. 219); he based *Gassed* on a scene he witnessed together with Henry Tonks (1862-1937), a surgeon and artist whose portraits of the war-disfigured will be considered in the following chapter. Tonks wrote this description of what he and Sargent saw:

...we heard that on the Doullens Road at the Corps dressing station at le Bac-du-sud there were a good many gassed cases, so we went there. The dressing station was situated on the road and consisted of a number of huts and a few tents. Gassed cases kept coming in, lead along in parties of about six just as Sargent has depicted them, by an orderly. They sat or lay down on the grass, there must have been several hundred, evidently suffering a great deal, chiefly I fancy from their eyes which were covered up by a piece of lint [...] Sargent was very struck by the scene and immediately made a lot of notes. (Tonks 1920, cited by IWM ART 1460).

Conceptually, here is an example of givenness being clearly related to finding, a relationship identified in Section 2.6 as not being addressed by Marion. It implies the active role of the painter and in this case Sargent, in his role as war artist, set out with the intentionality of finding a suitable scene to record. The resulting painting shows a line of gassed and blindfolded soldiers being led by a medical orderly, each man holding on to the shoulder of the man in front. In the foreground are gassed soldiers lying on the ground no doubt desperately worried about possible permanent loss of sight (Cork 1994, p. 221); there is another line of blindfolded men in the middle distance; and a football match is taking place in the far distance. However, whilst there is pain and suffering in this picture, it also has faint signs of hope. The wounded are on their way to medical help, their bandages are clean and their wounds discreet (Gough 2010, p. 200), and the football match shows that normal human activity has not been totally eliminated. The painting was nominated picture of the year by the Royal Academy (Glover 2013) but was not universally admired, as is clear for example in E.M. Forster's comment directed at Sargent:

...the upper classes only allow the lower classes to appear in art on condition that they wash themselves and have classical features. These conditions you fulfilled. A line of golden-haired Apollos moving along a duck-board [...] No one complained, no one looked lousy or over-tired, and the aeroplanes overhead struck the necessary note of the majesty of England. It was all that a great war picture should be and it was modern because it managed to tell a new sort of lie. (Forster 1967, p. 39).



Does Forster have a point? Perhaps the scene has been cleaned up, on the other hand the painting was based on records made at the time, and Sargent wrote of a 'harrowing' sight (Charteris 1927, p. 214). The slowly moving men, not all of whom are 'golden haired', need to be helped by an orderly, and one appears to be vomiting albeit turned away from the viewer. The foreground is a jumbled mass of prostrate men and the aeroplanes are so far in the distance that they are hardly proclaiming 'the majesty of England.' However, like many other war paintings it can be argued that it does tell 'a new sort of lie' in the sense that it comes nowhere near Dix in showing the worst of trench warfare, for that was outside Sargent's experience. It was 'only German artists who saw the First World War clearly', wrote Jones (2014a), with reference to Dix.

The dimension of hope is more pronounced in some paintings of casualties, for example there is a sense of reassurance in *In an Ambulance: A VAD*<sup>16</sup> *Lighting a Cigarette for a Patient* (Mudie-Cooke 1919). Olive Mudie-Cooke (1890-1925) was an English artist who served in France as a member of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry, and her watercolours included 'ordinary, seemingly little things' (Speck 2014, p. 66). The Scottish artist Norah Neilson-Gray (1882-1931) worked as an orderly at the Scottish Women's Hospital at Royaumont in France, and was commissioned by the Women's Work Sub-Committee of the Imperial War Museum to produce a painting which recognised women's hospital work. The result was *Scottish Women's Hospital: In the Cloister of the Abbaye at Royaumont. Dr Frances Ivens Inspecting a French Patient* (Neilson-Gray 1920). To the left are patients, nurses, and Chief Medical Officer Ivens; on the right is a group of uniformed soldiers ready to return to their units, implying 'the success of care and treatment at the hospital' (Speck 2014, p. 64). In these examples of the visualisation of hope, here is another connection between war art and the Bible, as discussed further in Section 5.6.

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<sup>16</sup> VAD stands for Voluntary Aid Detachment.

The theme of technology such as shells and mustard gas is implicit in some of the artworks already touched upon, and is dominant in many other paintings, reflecting the prevalence of technological innovation. For example, the First World War saw the first major use of poison gas and flamethrowers; tanks were used for the first time; and it was the first war to be fought 'in three dimensions', on land, at sea and in the air (IWM 2016). With respect to war on the land, the earlier war paintings of C.R.W. Nevinson have already been mentioned, and the impressions that some of them give of men as part of military technology, even serving it, are reinforced by the work of Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957). He was a Canadian-born British painter who fought in France as an artillery officer and was commissioned by the Canadian Government to paint pictures of the front (Humphreys 2016). For example, the semi-abstract *A Canadian Gun-pit* (Lewis 1918) shows the close relationship between men and machine, with two soldiers aiming an eight-inch howitzer and others lining up shells to feed the gun. Lewis was a founder of the short-lived Vorticist movement, believing that abstraction was the appropriate response to modern life, and saying 'All revolutionary painting today has in common the rigid reflections of steel and stone in the spirit of the artist' (cited by Upstone 2010, p. 28). Such reflections can also be seen in the faces of the soldiers in servitude to the gun - they are faces of metal, hard and angular.

Turning to the war at sea, technology is dominant in the battleship paintings of Oscar Parkes (1885-1958), who served as a Royal Navy surgeon. Images of naval warfare are exemplified by his *HMS Lord Clive: Shelling the German Forts on the Belgian Coast with her 18-inch Gun* (Parkes 1918), in which the 18-inch and other guns dwarf a small group of sailors on the deck. People appear similarly insignificant in a Vorticist painting by Edward Wadsworth (1889-1949), *Dazzle-ships in Dry Dock, Liverpool* (Wadsworth 1919). Wadsworth as a member of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve was involved in so-called dazzle painting, employing abstract patterns derived from Vorticism to optically distort and cause confusion concerning a ship's size, shape and direction of travel. His Liverpool painting is dominated by the ships, one in particular, towering above a group of four workers. Comparable

impressions concerning relative sizes are also given in many paintings concerning aerial warfare, for example the Irish artist John Lavery (1856-1941), in *'Rigids' at Pulham, 1918. R23 type British Airships at Pulham St. Mary, Norfolk* (Lavery 1918), shows the rear fins of two airships rising high above a tank and small figures on the hangar floor. The human element is even less visible in the many paintings of Sydney Carline (1888-1929) who served as a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps and then as a war artist for the Royal Air Force. His 'vivid depictions of the new phenomenon' of aerial combat (Slocombe 2014) include *Destruction of an Austrian Machine in the Gorge of the Brenta Valley, Italy* (Carline 1918), and *The Sea of Galilee: Aeroplanes Attacking Turkish Boats* (Carline 1919). He wrote of the former incident:

On patrol with two others we saw a Hun two-seater taking photos 5,000 feet below us (we at 10,000) and on our side of the Line, we dived on him. He put up no show, the pilot was shot, and the observer leaning over tried to dive for home but he was shot and the machine crashed into the river.

(Carline, cited by Slocombe 2014, p. 5).

However, the pilot and the observer can hardly be seen in this and other paintings by Carline because the focus is the aircraft and their tactical settings within landscapes.

On the home front, the English artist Anna Airy (1882-1964) was commissioned by the Munitions Committee of the Imperial War Museum to produce four pictures showing scenes in munitions factories. One of these, in which the work force is shown as predominantly female, is *Shop for Machining 15-inch Shells: Singer Manufacturing Company, Clydebank, Glasgow* (Airy 1918a), a painting dominated by two rows of shell cases on wooden trolleys and winches hanging from the ceiling. Another, *A Shell Forge at a National Projectile Factory, Hackney Marshes, London* (Airy 1918b) was particularly memorable for its painting environment:

Much the most taxing job I had was painting the six-inch shells at Hackney Marshes. They'd bring them out in batches of twenty to forty at a time, and put them down on the earth floor to cool. No matter where I stood, I'd have some rolled to within a few feet of me! I've never felt such heat! [...] I had to paint, too, at lightning speed, for the metal which came out red hot changed

colour every minute as it cooled, and my paints dried as quickly as ink on writing paper! (Airy 1924, cited by Speck 2014, p. 23).

Airy's vivid comments lead to consideration of the relationships between individual persons and the various expressions and innovations of war technology. These will be addressed in the following section which includes concepts of the overwhelming sublime being experienced through technological or military manifestations.

## 5.5 Phenomenological Analysis

Marion (2002b, p. 36) includes war in a list of saturated phenomena of the event type, that is collective phenomena which at a minimum satisfy the three criteria of being unrepeatable; eliciting inexhaustible hermeneutics rather than identification of a unique cause; and unforeseeable. In particular, he describes the First World War as dismissing all cause, benefiting from:

...all imaginable information; geographic documentation, demographic statistics, economics, ideological and scientific production, state of civil and military technologies, investigations by the press, etc. - and the imagination stops conceiving more often than the banks of data accumulating.  
(Marion 2002a, p. 167).

After elaborating further in this vein, Marion concludes that is 'this overabundance that forbids assigning it a cause, and even forbids understanding it through a combination of causes [...] the event happens by itself', irrepressibly irrupting into the summer of 1914 (Marion 2002a, p. 168). The artworks described, a small selection from the huge variety and quantity produced, substantiate Marion's identification of war as a collective saturated phenomenon but go further in exemplifying how artists responded to specific experiences within this larger whole. It was seeing the aftermath of the Battle of Passchendaele which marked a profound transformation in Nash's work, for what burst in upon him then and to which he responded in his later war paintings was the givenness of horror, devastation and hopelessness, the givenness of an experience of the absence of God. It was his prolonged experience of fighting in the trenches and seeing for himself

the givenness of terrible injuries, death and decomposition which fuelled Otto Dix's *War* series. It was the givenness of her son Peter's death and the ensuing emotional and intellectual grappling which led to Käthe Kollwitz's own *War* series. The evidence of the art is that all these were individual experiences of saturated phenomena in their own right, so it may be concluded that there is nesting of such phenomena within the overall war context, conceptually similar to the nesting previously demonstrated for nature and the Bible. It is also apparent that different artists responded to their shocks over different time scales, exemplified by Nash's paintings being produced quickly and seeming to require the recent stimulus of war experience, and Spencer, Dix and Kollwitz all needing long reflective periods. Other evidence provided by the paintings themselves shows that several artists responded to the new technology, sometimes depicting it as looming massively over diminutive human figures, and sometimes pictorially integrating it with the human in symbiotic relationships. Moreover, exemplified by the early C.R.W. Nevinson and Wyndham Lewis as mentioned in Section 5.4, these symbiotic developments sometimes went hand in hand with the two early 20<sup>th</sup> century movements of Futurism and Vorticism, both of which emphasised the machine age.

Related to the identification of the First World War as a saturated phenomenon is its identification as sublime, following Marion's understanding that the Kantian example of the sublime permits us 'to broaden the field of application for the saturated phenomenon' (Marion 2002a, p. 220). The sublime is a large and diverse subject with a long history; it was introduced in Chapter 3 together with its relationship to saturated phenomena, and in general terms may be re-expressed here:

...whenever experience slips out of conventional understanding, whenever the power of an object or event is such that words fail and points of comparison disappear, then we resort to the feeling of the sublime. As such, the sublime marks the limits of reason and expression together with a sense of what might lie beyond these limits...(Shaw 2006, p. 2).

In the context of war, Simon (2003, p. 47) refers specifically to 'the sublime of destruction: World War 1 and the military machine', and other relevant terms include the 'technological sublime' (Nye 1994; Simon 2003, pp. 8-9) and the 'military sublime' (Biernoff 2014, p. 39). There is also the 'apocalyptic sublime', referring to catastrophic devastation rather than the eschatological end-time. This concept was introduced in Chapter 4 with respect to nineteenth century paintings of the deluge, where it 'forms a bridge between natural catastrophe and apocalypse by showing divine forces virtually breaking through nature' (Paley 1986, p. 2). It has later been applied to paintings of 'artificial or human-induced experiences' such as the 'American apocalyptic sublime' in the work of Jack Goldstein, who pursued what he called the 'spectacular instant' (Garnett and Armitage 2011, pp. 215-216). Goldstein (1945-2003) painted dark skies with explosions, lightning bolts and radiating lines of light, close relatives of Nevinson's *Bursting Shell* (Nevinson 1915b) and *Explosion* (Nevinson c. 1916).

In Chapter 3 the sublime is discussed in the context of experiences of nature encompassing feelings of limitlessness and awe, and sometimes insecurity and fear. One possible interpretation is that through nature we have an intimation of the divine, the limitlessness and power of the God of creation. Now in Chapter 5 the technological sublime refers to overpowering experiences of awe, fear, horror, and disorientation in the face of military technology - can this really be interpreted in the same way, as pointing to the divine? One way to tackle this question is to adopt the postmodern viewpoint which recognises *feelings* of the sublime without seeking to refer to the transcendent:

Where Romantic art tends, on the whole, to link the unrepresentable with ideas of the divine [...] postmodern culture endeavours to retain a sense of the unrepresentable as absolutely other. It seeks, as the French theorist Jean-Francois Lyotard argues, to sustain 'the incommensurability of reality to concept which is implied in the Kantian philosophy of the mind.'  
(Shaw 2006, p. 116).

However, it is hardly consistent to leave open a theological approach to the sublime in nature and to close it for the First World War. Hence a possible

solution, the concept of the fallen powers, will be examined in the following section. This will be followed by a discussion of the biblical connections which have already arisen in connection with some of the war artists.

## **5.6 Theological Interpretation**

With the throwing down of the 'ancient serpent' (Revelation 12: 7-9), for the time being Satan is like 'a rogue animal that the forces of God have corralled [...] The beast rampages within its newly limited circumstances, seeking to do as much damage as possible...' (Koester 2001; 123). The theatre of war has moved from heaven to earth. This ancient worldview is still real to some Christians, but is difficult to sustain intellectually in the contemporary western world (Liechty 2006, p. 39). Nevertheless, as Rupp (1965, p. 11) has pointed out, such a view can only have arisen in the context of people's real experiences of finding themselves caught up in natural or socio-historical events going beyond their understanding and control. In that respect the First World War went far beyond the grasp of any individuals or groups, but burst into people's lives as a saturated phenomenon laying waste. Marion, in identifying the war as a whole as saturated event, does not offer ways to interpret either this or subsequent wars and acts of terror in terms relevant to people struggling to make sense of devastated lives. What is it that is hitting people from beyond any horizons they can conceive, surely it is not of God?

Walter Wink, already mentioned in Section 1.3 in connection with his panentheistic 'integral worldview', adopted a phenomenological rather than a metaphysical approach to evil (Wink 1992, pp. 8-9). He pointed out that the New Testament has numerous references to enigmatic entities variously called spiritual forces of evil, demons, principalities, powers, authorities, thrones, rulers, elements, and angels, hereafter jointly called 'Powers', which are experienced in human affairs and interpreted in various ways. Some New Testament texts and expositions, if considered in isolation, leave open the possibility of interpreting them dualistically - as autonomous evil forces opposing good. That would be one way of interpreting where the saturated

phenomena of war are coming from. However, the Powers are not always labelled as evil, and some texts show that they were seen as part of God's created order. In particular, Colossians 1:16 states that in Christ 'all things in heaven and earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers - all things have been created through him and for him.' In *Naming the Powers*, Wink (1984), on the basis of a detailed exegesis of the primary texts, concludes that the biblical terms for power are somewhat interchangeable, that the Powers are both spiritual and material, and that they are simultaneously good, fallen, and in need of redemption. They are located in heaven, understood as follows:

Heaven is the transcendent "within" of material reality [...] the metaphorical "place" in which the spirituality of everything is "located," as it were. "Heaven," in religions all around the world, is precisely that - the habitat of angels, spirits, cherubim, and seraphim, but also of demons and the devil and all the Powers "in the heavenly places." (Wink 1984, pp. 118-119).

In *Unmasking the Powers* (Wink 1986) relates these concepts to experiences of evil, with diverse illustrations of how different Powers manifest and can be discerned in the human psyche and the inner reality of institutions. For example, 'angels' are interpreted as the spiritualities of social groups including corporations and nations. The angels fall and become demonic when the groups stray from their God-given tasks and pursue idolatrous goals. This interpretation can be seen as widely applicable in human affairs including the First World War. The elements (*stoicheia*) are interpreted as basic conditions of existence, examples with contemporary meaning being space, time, and physical forces. Such Powers fall and become demonic, as in the technology of war, when they become idolised by desire for knowledge and dominion on the part of science or of nations.

In *Engaging the Powers*, Wink (1992), incorporating ideas from the preceding two volumes of his trilogy, elaborates his integral worldview in which the Powers are simultaneously the visible outer and the invisible 'within' or 'spirituality' of social and material realities. Adopting this worldview, it is proposed that experience of the destructive military technological sublime marks the limit where we sense that beyond our



understanding and control lies the transcendent inner dimension, populated by the demons of fallen science, industry and nationhood. The corollary of this approach is that the integral world view should also be applicable to nature, so referring back to Chapter 3, it is proposed that experience of the sublime in nature marks the limit where we sense that beyond our understanding and control lies the transcendent inner dimension, populated by angels. It is also possible to encompass within Wink's worldview a remark made by Chagall, touched on in Section 4.6. Writing about mysticism in the context of the Second World War, he referred to 'misconceived mysticism, exploited for evil, cruel and one-sided - the mysticism of the enemy' (Chagall 1946, p. 75). In other words, the transcendent dimension of fallen mysticism, become demonic.

As suggested by comments about specific artists earlier in this chapter, interpretation of war paintings can be expanded in terms both of traditions of biblical imagery in art, and types of biblical discourse such as prophecy. Visual links may often be made with historical Christian representation, for example the composition of Dix's *War* triptych was modelled on Matthias Grünewald's 16<sup>th</sup> century Isenheim altarpiece (Karcher 2010, p. 48); the context of Katharina Heise's *Funeral Procession* is a Christian cemetery with clearly visible crosses; and Henry Tonk's *Saline Infusion: An Incident in the British Red Cross Hospital, Arc-en-Barrois* 1915 (Tonks 1915), 'is arranged like a Descent from the Cross' (Biernoff 2014, p. 36). It is not meant to imply that war artists were necessarily 'religious' but it may be supposed that, at the time, familiarity with Christian imagery was more widespread than today, and that drawing upon this visual tradition would come quite naturally. The Bible was a significant influence on painters of the First World War because most of them would have absorbed at least some of its content whilst growing up, to an extent which probably would not apply today. More generally, it is also the case that during war the most primal human emotions, both good and bad, are unleashed, and the Bible speaks comprehensively to this raw human condition.

Consideration of the theme of prophecy arises from Nash's self-identification as having a role thrust upon him. This is reminiscent of the Hebrew prophets, people who accepted, sometimes reluctantly, the role of bearing divine messages to groups of people or sometimes to specific individuals (Rooke 2008, p. 393). These prophets were of course conscious of God as the source of the messages; it is not obvious that Nash had a similar awareness, and he was certainly not attracted to formal religion (Jenkins 2010, p. 28). On the other hand he did describe what he had seen at Passchendaele as 'godless', and wrote to Margaret 'you are meant to die or not as God wills, I have no other belief save in His mercy' (Nash 1949, p. 193). In short, he did 'consider a world beyond that which is experienced directly' (Jenkins 2010, p. 28). Even if this had not been the case, his moral outrage is undeniable, so on ethical grounds alone an argument can be made for his war paintings being a type of visual prophecy. They also fit with one of the tasks of the prophetic imagination as envisaged by the American theologian Walter Brueggemann (1933-), to provide symbols 'that are adequate to confront the horror and massiveness of the experience that evokes numbness and requires denial. The prophet provides a way in which the cover-up and the stonewalling can be ended' (Brueggemann 2001 p. 45). In this respect the images of Nevinson, Dix and Kollwitz, of physical pain, death, and decay, and mental pain, sacrifice, grief and lamentation, are also visual prophecy; and their words as quoted in Section 5.4 suggest that they did indeed feel they had messages to deliver to the wider world.

Prophets may also deliver messages of hope, for example Isaiah 43: 1-7 (including the words 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you') and Jeremiah 31: 7-9 (including 'with consolations I will lead them back'), are just two of many texts in which God says to the Judahite exiles in Babylon, through the 'hopeful imagination' of the prophets (Brueggemann 1986), that on the other side of disaster there will be restoration. In related vein, there are messages of hope in some of the First World War paintings, such as the ambulance and hospital paintings of Mudie-Cooke and Neilson-Gray described in Section 5.4; and in particular the foremost painter of redemption, Stanley Spencer. He had a strong albeit unconventional Christian faith which

enabled him to look beyond both the suffering he witnessed and his own doubts, expressed for example in 1918 when he was in hospital with malaria:

In some of the awful moments I have felt the need for greater faith, & afterwards I found myself asking the question: Christ has been adequate to me in all things, but is he in this? [...] It is an awful shock to find how little my Faith has stood in my stead to help me.  
(Spencer 1918, cited by Gough 2011, p. 119).

From his use of the word 'redemption' in his writings, it is clear that Spencer was aware that this is what he was seeking. For example, a glimpse of the Vardar valley in Macedonia

began in me a course of longing for something findable in that country [...] It became the goal & place wherein spiritually I was wanting to find the redeeming & delivering of myself in all the activities [the] unexpressed me had lived through & in. (Spencer 1945-1947, cited by Glew 2001, pp. 76-77).

He expressed the theme of redemption again when, on return to England and with an official commission for a single large canvas, he painted *Travoy's Arriving with Wounded at a Dressing-Station at Smol, Macedonia* 1919 (Spencer 1919). This scene, reconstructed from memory because his sketches had been lost during military operations, was 'not a scene of horror but a scene of redemption from it and I was right in making it a happy picture as the early painters were right in making the Crucifixion a happy painting' (Tate Archive 733.3.1, cited by Gough 2006, p. 86). As for the Beaufort scenes in the Sandham Memorial Chapel:

My intention was to attempt to express the very happy imaginative feelings had in that hospital revealed through my different performances & leading to a kind of redemption of the atmosphere & feelings that the place & circumstances gave me. (Spencer 1945-1947, cited by Glew 2001, p. 135).

Spencer refers above to imaginative feelings; and the evidence from the range of paintings considered in this chapter shows that he was by no means the only artist whose imagination was stimulated. We are left with the paradox that the givens of war can engender heights of creativity:

This complicated, often contradictory, sensibility was brilliantly summarized by the poet, painter and one-time infantry officer David Jones, when he described the weird topography of No-Man's-Land, as a zone where [...] 'the sudden violences and long stillnesses, the sharp contours and unformed voids of that mysterious existence profoundly affected the imaginations of those who suffered it. It was a place of enchantment.'

Gough (2010, p. 319), and Jones (2014, p. x).

How can this contradictory nature of the First World War be understood?

Following Marion the war can be identified as a saturated phenomenon of the event type, but I have also suggested that, like nature and the Bible, its saturation is nested. This allows a way of approaching the war's paradoxical nature, because by dissecting the totality of the appalling overwhelming event, one may arrive at a large number of phenomena contained within it, each saturated in its own right. This process de-sublimates what has earlier been referred to in general terms as the technological, military or apocalyptic sublime. The de-sublimation brings into view a great variety of details, and this is exactly what the war paintings do, showing both the imagination-stirring atmosphere mentioned above by Jones, and decomposing corpses in the mud; devastated landscapes and the sprouting of regenerating trees; enthrallment to the military technology of destruction, and the care of the wounded in hospital; filling tea urns and sorting laundry. Perhaps the artists were responding to what they sensed of Wink's transcendent inner dimension, sometimes populated by demons and sometimes by angels.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE THIRD SPIRAL (1): GIVENS IN AND THROUGH PERSONS

#### 6.1 Persons and saturated phenomena

The third spiral in *The Three Spirals* model is multiple, comprising a myriad of persons inhabiting simultaneously the first spiral of nature and the second spiral of culture, all with their incrementing experiences and thoughts, on the one hand independent and on the other interrelating without merging. To explore the third spiral from a painterly point of view is to enter the world of portraits, paintings of persons particularly their faces; and this involves theological considerations at the outset in elucidating concepts of personhood. The chapter then moves to portraiture from the Renaissance to the present time, investigating diverse approaches through a selection of examples, and identifying factors which influenced the artists. 'Portraits at the limits' examines the difficult and controversial subjects of birth, death, and the suffering of disfigurement, all of which have been considered by Marion from a phenomenological point of view; and 'Sinners and saints' inquires on the one hand into the portrayal of persons who have been called evil, and on the other into the depiction of saints in icons. Phenomenological analysis includes the nature of face to face encounters, birth and death seen as the event type of saturated phenomenon, and portrait idolatry. Theological considerations are brought to bear on the question of distinguishing between portraits and icons, and the nature of revelation through portrait painting.

#### 6.2 What is a person?

This question touches on an immense subject with its roots in classical antiquity and its development related to Christian theologising about the Incarnation and the Trinity. Zizioulas (1985, p. 27) goes so far as to say that

‘although the person and “personal identity” are widely discussed nowadays as a supreme ideal, nobody seems to recognise that *historically* as well as *existentially* the concept of the person is indissolubly bound up with theology’ (Zizioulas’ italics).

Summarising history, the word ‘person’ comes from the Latin *persona*, originally meaning a mask as worn by actors in ancient Greece and Rome, and by extension coming to mean ‘a theatrical character’ or ‘a role in a play’, and hence ‘a being who speaks and acts’ (McGrath 1997, p. 243). The first formal definition was by the Roman philosopher Boethius in the early 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, in *De Duabus Naturis* chapter 3: *persona est naturae rationalis individual substantia*, ‘a person is the individual substance of a rational nature’ (Boethius, cited by Müller and Halder 1975, p.1207; McGrath 1997, p. 244). However, this definition does not include the possibility of three persons within the substance of God, a problem which was addressed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by the mystical theologian Richard of Saint Victor. In his *De Trinitate* Book IV he proposes: *intellectualis naturae incommunicabilis existentia*, ‘an incommunicable existence of an intellectual nature’ (Richard of Saint Victor, cited by Müller and Halder 1975, p. 1207), alternatively translated by Angelici (2011, p. 146) as ‘an individual, singular, incommunicable property.’ This conceptual history is still discernible in some more recent expressions, for example:

Person does not mean “essence” or “nature” but the actual unique reality of a spiritual being, an undivided whole existing independently and not interchangeable with any other. This reality is the reality of a being which belongs to itself and is therefore its own end in itself. It is the concrete form taken by the freedom of a spiritual being, on which is based its inviolable dignity. (Müller and Halder 1975, p. 1207).

In addition to this strand which emphasises uniqueness and independence, and also bound up with Christian theologising, there is the relational dimension. Augustine, in his discussion of the Trinity, describes God as ‘a trinity of persons mutually interrelated, and a unity of an equal essence.’ Further, drawing upon humanity as the ‘inadequate image’, he points to the

God of love as necessarily plural, distinguishing the lover, the beloved and love itself (Augustine 2012, pp. 315-316, first published c. 419 CE). Richard of Saint Victor goes further in his *De Trinitate* Book III with his focus on *condilectio*, translated as *co-love*, neither self-addressed nor reciprocal, but requiring a third person whether human or divine and so allowing plurality to ‘harmoniously coexist in unity’ (Angelici 2011, p. 132).

Twentieth and twenty-first century developments from this historical basis include two significant philosophical strands which will be used in conversation with Marion for the analysis of portraiture in Section 6.6. First, Martin Buber (1878-1965), an Austrian-born Israeli-Jewish philosopher, distinguished between *I-Thou* and *I-It*; and second, Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), a French philosopher of Lithuanian-Jewish ancestry, addressed *the Face of the Other*, and was an influence on Marion. Following this from a theological point of view, reference will be made in Section 6.7 to interpretations of the *imago Dei* as *imago Trinitatis*, in which the emphasis is on relationality and personal encounter.

### **6.3 Approaches to portrait painting**

Relationships between the artist and his or her subject are clearly fundamental to portrait painting, and to investigate these a selection of painters will be considered; in chronological order they are Leonardo da Vinci, Édouard Manet, Edward Burne-Jones, the ‘School of London’ and Mitch Griffiths. The aim is to explore how the givenness of subjects is received by these diverse artists within their cultural environments.

The Renaissance saw ‘a revolutionary improvement in verisimilitude’ (Gayford 2008, p. 1), and with respect to portraits this is epitomised by the observational knowledge-based approach of Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). The prolific original studies underpinning his paintings include anatomy, for example *Vertical and Horizontal Sections of the Human Head* (da Vinci c. 1489-1492) and *The Superficial Anatomy of the Shoulder and Neck* (da Vinci

c 1510-1511); and many drawings of heads, for example his *Study for the Apostle Philip*, *Study for Judas*, and *Study for St James* (da Vinci c.1495-1497a, b, and c respectively). These, apparently drawn from life, contributed to the *Last Supper* (da Vinci 1495–1498), with its ‘complex and deeply-pondered narrative’ and ‘striking individualisation of the disciples’ (Kemp and Roberts 1989, p. 88). The painting depicts the moment when Jesus said ‘...one of you will betray me’, when the disciples became ‘greatly distressed’ (Matthew 26: 21-22); and with *Study for St James* a clear connection can be made between signs of distress in the model’s expression and that of James, seated second from the right of Jesus in the *Last Supper* (Ede 2011, p. 266). Here in paint is a working out of Leonardo’s statement that ‘the good painter has two things to depict: the man and his state of mind. The first is easy, the second difficult, because it has to be done through the gestures and movements of the parts of the body’ (da Vinci manuscript CU 60v, cited by Chastel 2002 p.140).

A preparatory sketch has also been identified for *The Lady with an Ermine*, (da Vinci c. 1489-90), believed to be the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani as already mentioned in Section 2.2 in terms of the painting’s evolution. The sketch is one of many on a sheet with a woman’s head, neck and shoulders explored from various angles and diverse poses; there is no sign of an ermine. Further, it has been speculated that a semi-diagrammatic head in profile drawn within a perfect circle could be Cecilia’s, and that a statement is being made about her beauty (Syson and Keith 2011, pp. 112-113, 118-119). Whether or not this is true, Leonardo’s ideas about beauty are clearly related to his studies of harmonious proportions and symmetry, as exemplified by *Proportional Study of the Eye and the Face* (da Vinci c. 1489) and *The Proportions of the Male Head* (da Vinci c. 1490), together with his detailed writings on body measurements and proportions (e.g. as cited by Chastel 2002, pp. 126-130).

As shown in his writings, Leonardo embraced both the concept of the ‘painter as mirror’ and that of the ‘painter as master’:



*Painting.* The mind of the painter should liken itself to a mirror which always takes on the color of the thing it reflects and is filled by as many images as there are objects before it. O Painter, know that to excel you must have the universal power to represent all the varieties of forms nature produces, and this you will not know how to do without seeing and retaining them in your mind.

*How the painter is master of all sorts of people and of all things.* If the painter wishes to see beauties capable of inspiring love, he has the ability of creating them, and if he wishes to see monstrous things that frighten, or jests that cause laughter, or things that inspire piety, he is their lord and master.

(da Vinci BN 2038 31v and CU 5r, cited by Chastel 2002, pp. 50-51)

Such a combination of close observation with imaginative judgement gives the technique of 'synthetic naturalism' (Syson and Keith 2011, p. 38), consistent with the view in Renaissance Italy at this time 'that female portraits in particular could legitimately be idealised' because outward beauty was regarded as a 'sign of inner virtue' (Syson and Keith 2011, p. 103). Whilst they involved studies from life, such portraits were transformed during the painting process, for they were not completed in front of the sitter and rather than attempting to reveal the inner self, they depicted social standing and roles such as wife and mother, 'individual variants of the society's paradigm of the "ideal woman"' (Brown 2001, p. 12). In Leonardo's case increasing idealisation has been seen in the progression of the portraits *The Lady with the Ermine* (da Vinci c. 1489-90), *The Belle Ferronnière* (da Vinci c. 1493-94), and the *Mona Lisa* (da Vinci c. 1502-6); and thence to female portraits by Raphael (1483-1520) and Titian (c. 1490-1576) 'whose specific identities sometimes matter less than the beauty with which they were painted' (Syson and Keith 2011, pp. 103-104).

Other studies by Leonardo encompass the sympathetically realistic *Head of an Old Man* (da Vinci c. 1514-15); the exaggerated *Profiles of an Old Man and a Youth* (da Vinci c. 1495); the belligerent *Head of a Man and a Lion* (da Vinci c. 1503-05); and the grotesque *Five Characters in a Comic Scene* (da Vinci c. 1490). Leonardo was fascinated by the grotesque (Ede 2011, pp. 264-265) and he theorised about physiognomy. The exaggeration evident in *Head of a Man and a Lion* reflects Leonardo's advice on how to represent an angry man: 'His hair should stand on end, his eyebrows should be lowered

and drawn together, his teeth clenched, and the corners of his mouth pulled down in a curve' (da Vinci BN 2038 29v, cited by Chastel 2002, p. 141).

Between the Renaissance and modernity, the work of the French painter Édouard Manet (1832-1883) can be seen as a turning point. Repeatedly experimenting with composition and techniques and never wanting to repeat himself, Manet's rationale was that each painting:

...should be a new creation of the mind [...] the eye should forget all else it has seen, and learn anew from the lessons before it. It should abstract itself from memory, seeing only that which it looks upon, and that as for the first time. (Manet 1876, cited by Wilson-Bareau 1995, p. 305).

This convention-breaking attitude eventually led to him being seen as the 'founding father' of modern art and the immediate predecessor of the Impressionists (Stevens 2012, pp. 18, 33).

Manet's portrait of Antonin Proust (Manet 1880), arts minister, patron and an intimate friend, is attention-catching in its own right but also gives starting points for more general considerations. The portrait is three-quarters length, with the robust and bearded Proust looking out confidently at the viewer. He is dressed stylishly in a black frock-coat, black cravat, and gleaming top hat; his gloved right hand is on his hip; the ungloved left hand holds a cane and the other glove, loosely painted. There is no background apart from a fairly uniform brown colour. Manet wrote:

Your portrait has been at the Salon for three weeks now, my dear Proust, unflatteringly displayed on a slanting panel near the door and getting a still more unflattering reception. But it's my lot to be abused and I take it philosophically. No one realizes [...] how difficult it is to place a figure on canvas and concentrate all the attention on this single figure without losing its lively, full-blooded character [...] Your portrait is an absolutely honest work. I can remember as if it were yesterday the quick way I sketched in the glove belonging to the bare hand. At that very moment you said, 'Please, not another brushstroke', and I felt we were in such perfect agreement that I couldn't resist the impulse to embrace you.  
(Manet 1880 cited by Wilson-Bareau 1995, p. 246).

Here are two points of general relevance, the first in the portrait itself and the second in the letter. They are respectively the messages about the person

which clothes or other accoutrements add to what is conveyed by the face; and the relationships between painter and the model. Further, the beginning of the letter shows the controversial nature of Manet's work as seen by many of his contemporaries. Here is an effect of 'the shock of the new' mentioned in Section 1.6; the shock experienced by the Salon visitors being Manet's departure from the painting conventions of the time.

Manet worked at a time when representational portrait painting was being challenged by photography, with 'competing notions of the portrait, the photograph and the person' rubbing up against one another (Armstrong 2012, p. 42). Armstrong sees Manet's Proust as a 'Velázquez-style portrait transformed by the modern medium of photography, with the garb and accoutrements of modern urban masculinity.' In his aspirations to paint contemporary society with vitality, Manet had both studied and challenged the Old Masters (Stevens 2012, pp. 17-18), and in the wake of a visit to Madrid had developed a particular admiration for Velázquez, referring to him as 'the painter of painters', and referring to a portrait of Pablo de Valladolid as 'the most astonishing item among his splendid work, and perhaps the most astonishing ever painted [...] The background disappears; it is simply air that surrounds the man, dressed all in black and alive' (Manet 1865, cited by Friedenthal 1963, p. 118). Further, Manet had the experience of posing for his own photographs in the studio of the well-known photographic portraitist Nadar (pseudonym of Gaspard-Félix Tournachon, 1820-1910); and the feeling of presence conveyed in Proust's portrait is reminiscent of the presence achieved by Nadar in some of his photographs including one of Manet himself. Yet Proust's top hat is 'brashly on', in defiance of the photographic studio's conventions at the time (Armstrong 2012, p.49).

Contemporary with Manet and like him and his modernist compatriots turning away from the artistic conventions of the time, the 'Victorian avant-garde', namely the London-based Pre-Raphaelites, took a different path. The name followed criticism by Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais of a painting by the Italian master Raphael (1483-1520), namely *The Transfiguration* (Raphael 1516-1520), with its 'grandiose disregard of the simplicity of truth,

the pompous posturing of the Apostles, the unspiritual attitudinising of our Saviour...' (cited by Hough 1961, p. 57). Opposing Royal Academy traditions, and at a time of rapid industrialisation and great social change, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood turned to religious, historical and literary themes and engaged with contemporary society. They painted with detailed realism, and this in part reflected the influence of the new technology of photography (Barringer and Rosenfeld 2012, pp. 9-11).

Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) was the group's youngest member, and his views on portraiture were recorded by his wife Georgiana:

Of course my faces have no expression in the sense in which people use the word. How should they have any? They are not portraits of people in paroxysms - paroxysms of terror, hatred, benevolence, desire, avarice, veneration, and all the 'passions' and 'emotions' that Le Brun and that kind of person find so *magnifique* in Raphael's later work [...] It is Winckelmann, isn't it, who says that when you come to the age of expression in Greek art you have come to the age of decadence? [...] "Portraiture," he also said, "may be great art. There is a sense, indeed, in which it is perhaps the greatest art of any. And portraiture involves expression. Quite true, but expression of what? Of a passion, an emotion, a mood? Certainly not. Paint a man or woman with the damned 'pleasing expression', or even the 'charmingly spontaneous' so dear to the 'photographic artist', and you see at once that the thing is a mask, as silly as the old tragic and comic mask. The only expression allowable in great portraiture is the expression of character and moral quality, not of anything temporary, fleeting, accidental. (Burne-Jones 1906, pp. 140-141):

Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) as mentioned above was a German classicist who published *The History of Ancient Art* in 1763 and who thought that contemporary artists 'could do no better than imitate antique works of art' (Allen 1949, pp. 228-230). Charles Le Brun (1619-1690) was a French artist and influential theorist, much admired by Louis XIV who appointed him First Painter to the King. In 1668 he gave a lecture to the Académie de Peinture on expression, *Conference sur l'expression générale et particulière*, and in the wake of this his theories became well-known through many subsequent publications of the text (Hartley 2005, p. 19), though did not remain unchallenged both in his own time (Dabbs 2002, p. 273), and subsequently of course by Edward Burne-Jones. His ideas and the way they relate to the portraits he painted will now be looked at in more

detail before returning to Edward Burne-Jones' portraiture with its contrasting ideology.

An English translation of Le Brun's *Conference sur l'expression générale et particulière* was published in 1734 (Le Brun 1734), and like other editions was accompanied by engravings based on Le Brun's original demonstration drawings of facial expressions conveying primary emotions such as anger, sadness and joy. Further, in 1671 Le Brun gave another lecture on physiognomy which included comparisons between human and animal features. His numerous now-fragile paper studies on this subject are in the Louvre but their reproduction as engravings in 1806 (Morel d'Arleux 1806) fed the contemporary interest in relationships between humans and animals, and in facial characteristics from a racial point of view (e.g. Louvre 2015). The original drawings, including the ass, ox, cat, hog, lion, monkey, camel, ram, horse, goat, crow, marten, wolf, bear, parrot, fox, and wild boar, have paired animal and human heads with the human exaggerated to emphasise animal characteristics. Whilst Le Brun's studies are particularly comprehensive, this was by no means the first time that such connections had been made; for example Leonardo da Vinci had previously drawn the *Head of a Man and a Lion*, as mentioned above, with the man's expression exaggerated to reflect the physiognomic type of 'belligerent warrior' common in Leonardo's work (Kemp and Roberts 1989, p. 90).

Returning to Edward Burne-Jones, his portrait of *Georgiana Burne-Jones*, (Burne-Jones, begun in 1883), is particularly enlightening. It was worked on at intervals and was not exhibited during his lifetime presumably because of its personal nature (Sothebys 2010). Georgiana, the daughter of a Wesleyan minister, aged forty-three and after twenty-three years of marriage, gazes solemnly directly at the viewer. She wears a plain dark dress with lace trim, and holds a copy of Gerard's *Herbal* open at an illustration of a pansy, symbol of loving thoughts. The couple's children Philip and Margaret are visible through a doorway in a room in the background. It has been suggested that the composition 'respects the sitter's manner of self-presentation as seen in a photograph [...] taken around the same time', in

which she is seated, upright, looking directly forward, similarly dressed and with book in hand (Smith 2012, p. 194). The sense of strong personality and integrity conveyed by the portrait are attributes otherwise observed by the artist Walford Graham Robertson (1866-1948) who on meeting her:

...met her eyes and became aware of a great personality. The quiet in those wonderful eyes of clearest grey was, I knew, the centre of the strange stillness that lay upon the place, yet beneath and beyond could be sensed an Energy, dominant, flame-like. (Robertson 1931, p. 75).

This evidence points to real givens from the person Georgiana Burne-Jones being appreciated by Edward and made visible in her portrait, with the pansies being a 'coded message' of his love (Sothebys 2010). However, as MacCarthy (2011, p. 35) has observed, 'Sometimes the features of Burne-Jones' desired women strike one as strangely interchangeable.' There is a grave silent beauty about them which can be interpreted as reflecting Edward's ideology of portraiture as quoted above, but perhaps in Georgiana's case there is an overlap of ideology and reality. There is more, a suggestion of sadness. The steady expression with which she returns inspection by Edward in his role as painter, was interpreted by their great-grandson Lance Thirkell as showing 'something of the unhappiness of being the artist's long-suffering wife, *which perhaps he did not see when he was painting*' (Marsh 1985, p. 334; Sothebys 2010, my italics). For the energy observed by Walford Graham Robertson was channeled not just into various social and political causes, but into her marriage, weathering the storms of Edward's recurring infidelity and tumultuous affair with the Greek model Maria Zambaco (Smith, 2012, p. 194; MacCarthy 2011, pp. 36-38).

London-based like the Pre-Raphaelites, but taking portraiture into the field of modern figurative art, the 'School of London' is a phrase first used in 1975 by the American-Jewish R B Kitaj (1932-2007). It refers to a group of artists including the Irish-born Francis Bacon (1909-1992), the two German-Jewish born painters Lucian Freud (1922-2011) and Frank Auerbach (1931-), and Kitaj himself (Brighton 2013, p. 57).

Within this group, the distinctiveness of Bacon includes his use of commissioned photographs as working documents. Harrison (2005, pp. 163, 170-173) refers to contact prints supplied by John Deakin as sheets with four rows each of three images; and to Bacon's use of strips of photographs from automated photo-booths, both self-portraits and images of friends who were persuaded to take part. These may have been factors which contributed to his predilection for triptychs, for example *Three Studies for Portrait of George Dyer (on pink ground)* (Bacon 1964). In interviews with David Sylvester, Bacon referred both to his use of photographs, and to his dynamic relationship with paint:

...I couldn't attempt to do a portrait from photographs of somebody I didn't know. But if I both know them and have photographs of them, I find it easier to work than actually having their presence in the room. I think that, if I have the presence of the image there, I am not able to drift so freely as I am able to through the photographic image [...] I find it less inhibiting to work from them through memory and their photographs...  
(Bacon 1966, cited by Sylvester 1993, pp. 38-40).

...I don't know how the form can be made. For instance, the other day I painted a head of somebody, and what made the sockets of the eyes, the nose, the mouth were, when you analyzed them, just forms which had nothing to do with eyes, nose or mouth; but the paint moving from one contour into another made a likeness of this person I was trying to paint.  
(Bacon 1962, cited by Sylvester 1993, p.12).

Going with the flow of the paint is one thing, the deliberate distortion depicted in many of Bacon's portraits is another. In *Head VI* (Bacon 1949) the top of the head is missing and areas of darkness just hint at eyes before the face is blurred into the background. The open mouth is screaming, with the source being attributed to two images, the nurse shot on the Odessa steps in the film *Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein 1925) and the distraught mother in Nicolas Poussin's *The Massacre of the Innocents* (Poussin c. 1630-1) (Brighton 2013, p. 42). *Head VI* is in fact the first of Bacon's 'Pope' series, based on a reproduction of Velázquez's portrait of Pope Innocent X (Velázquez 1650). The series eventually extended to over forty-five paintings over a period of twenty years (Arya 2009, p. 36); in one of these, *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (Bacon 1953) the eyes are again virtually omitted and the mouth is screaming:

If Bacon had intended to create an accurate physical representation of Pope Innocent X then we should conclude that he failed miserably. However, if instead Bacon intended to represent a nightmarish image which seethes with aggression, and yet communicates the inherent isolation of the pontiff's position, then his work is perfectly accurate. (Quigley and Elliott 2014).

In contrast to Bacon, the painting processes employed by Freud and Auerbach involve prolonged contact with models, getting to know them. The art critic Martin Gayford gives a book-long description of sitting for two portraits by Freud, *Man with a Blue Scarf* (Freud 2004) and an etching, processes which took one and a half years and involved eating meals together: 'The meal after the sitting, like the chat before [...] is evidently part of the procedure' (Gayford 2012, p. 17). Gayford also refers to Freud's painting *David Hockney* (Freud 2002), which took '120 hours and you see the layers' (Hockney 2004, cited by Howgate 2006, p. 43), representing the knowledge about a person which can only accumulate with time. Hence sitting for Freud could be a strenuous business, he was a 'ruthless' observer, with many sitters feeling 'tethered' (Greig 2015, pp. 128, 17), and this comes across in Freud's own description of his painting process:

The subject must be kept under closest observation: if this is done, day and night, the subject - he, she, or it - will eventually reveal the *all* without which selection itself is not possible; they will reveal it, through some and every facet of their lives or lack of life, through movements and attitudes, through every variation from one moment to another.  
(Freud 1954, pp. 23-24, Freud's italics).

Back-tracking from modern figurative art, the work of contemporary British artist Mitch Griffiths (1971-) is in the manner of the Old Masters (Wright 2010 p. 3), realistic, detailed, and with light and dark contrasts reminiscent of Caravaggio (1571-1610).

Many people say my paintings look photo-realist at times. I take it as a compliment but, it's not what I'm trying to achieve. A realist painting, any piece of realist art has to contain a soul, an organic quality. Technique must never overpower emotion or message. I'm not trying to make my work look real; I'm trying to make the viewer enter MY reality.  
(Griffiths 2010, cited by McKnight-Abrams 2010, McKnight-Abrams' capitals).

Some of Griffiths' portraits depict groups of interacting people, devised to convey allegorical messages about how he sees the reality of Britain today.



For example, *Rehab* (Griffiths 2008) uses crucifixion imagery to show an addict in pain, with alcohol, cigarettes and drugs at his feet, attended by three figures in protective clothing described by Wright (2010, p. 5) as ‘those who make a living from countering society’s destructive permissions.’ *The Flag Bearer* (Griffiths 2009a) is an individual portrait of the English ‘hard man’ actor Ray Winstone (1957-), wrapped in a shabby Union Jack which Griffiths sees as ‘the flag representing conflict and experience, the state of this nation and what it’s been through’ (White 2010). Preparation for this portrait included Griffiths visiting Winstone’s home to take photographs rather than make sketches.

Four related portraits, all painted in 2009, are of Ray’s daughter Lois, likewise wrapped in a Union Jack the worse for wear. They are *The Promised Land*, *The Lady of the Isles*, *Flag Girl*, and *Flag Bearer’s Daughter* (Griffiths 2009b, c, d and e respectively). In the first three, Lois looks down dejectedly, and in *The Lady of the Isles* there is the suggestion of a tear in her eye; in *Flag Bearer’s Daughter* she is looking up, perhaps with a returning spirit of hope or resolve. All her postures and expressions were filmed during a modelling session at a derelict coastal site, and subsequent editing interpolated images of the finished portraits. In the resulting short film *The Promised Land* (Griffiths 2010a) one can see clearly the relationships between the paintings and the modelling process including the facial expressions changing as the artist required.

#### **6.4 Portraits at the limits**

This section moves to portraits produced in more extreme circumstances than those considered so far, namely birth, death, and disfigurement, all subjects considered by Marion. He sees birth and death as event types of saturated phenomena as will be discussed in Section 6.6, and disfigurement raises questions about the gaze and counter-gaze of the icon which will be addressed in Section 6.7.

The British artist Ghislaine Howard (1953-) has been a pioneer in the painting of childbirth, having been commissioned in 1992 by Manchester City Art Galleries to spend four months as artist-in-residence at St Mary's Hospital maternity unit in Manchester. Howard (1993a) describes this as 'an extraordinary institution: it is here that the experience takes place that we have all shared - our naked entry into the world.' This experience is the subject of a number of paintings depicting different stages of childbirth, for example *Birth Painting* (Howard 1993b) has the baby half-emerged, with head, part of the face and arms visible, held by the midwife's hands. The mother is lying back with other hands on her, her partner's hand on her shoulder, and hospital staff hands on one of her sprawling legs. The sheet under the baby's head is stained with blood. *Newly Delivered Mother* (Howard 1993c) is one of several paintings in which the mother is holding her child, 'the first minutes for the mother and baby of the rest of their lives' (Corbett 1993).

During her hospital residency Howard kept a journal which is informative about her working methods; it is clear that photography was an essential part of the process because of the speed with which events can happen:

I arrive in the preparation room of the delivery unit where D is having twins by caesarian section. The doctors and patient have consented to my presence and I feel exhilarated and also scared stiff that I might faint [...] I begin to draw and take photographs, which is the only way I can cope with and make sense of what is happening [...] As things commence my rapid drawings become ever more notational and in between jotting I take shots - the camera is indispensable. (Howard 1994, diary entry for October 7).

Working on a birth painting in the studio, I have sheaves of rapid drawings with strong lines and large shapes. The sensations and memories are still immediate. The central figure of the woman dominates, the hands of the attendants reach inwards towards the centre of the painting. I draw in the major lines with scene painter's charcoal, making decisions as I work and changing things intuitively. For me, this initial onslaught on the canvas is a furious and concentrated affair...(Howard 1994, diary entry for October 25).

Viewers of the resulting exhibition *A Shared Experience*, Manchester City Art Gallery 1993, had the opportunity to record their reactions in the visitors' book; and the following comments are illustrative of the range of reactions:

How right and fitting that women's experience of birth - right or wrong - good or bad - should be recorded in this way. Wonderful, wonderful pictures!

Interesting, provoking, alarming, emotional and off-putting all at once. However, a very moving portrayal of an everyday event that social taboos prevent us from knowing the reality of.

Vivid, realistic, very moving. A far cry from the cosy picture of motherhood we're so often conned into accepting. This should be a permanent exhibition. (Visitors' Comments 1993).

The social taboos mentioned in the second of the above comments are a recurring reality, according to the conclusions of gynaecologist Sarah Welsh:

...there remains plenty of taboo around the representation of giving birth. The area of most social prohibition is that of crowning, the point at which the baby's head has pushed through the cervix and is about to enter the birth canal. (Welsh 2011).

Similarly, David and Rowe (2011) asked the question 'Is Birth the last taboo subject in art?' and suggest that it may be, given the reaction to an exhibition of birth paintings by the British artist Jonathan Waller (1956-). Originally inspired by the experience of supporting his wife Ruth through the birth of their daughter, Waller's detailed paintings, like Howard's, focus on the mother and the different stages of childbirth. However, one of the pictures 'was considered so shocking by the staff of a London gallery that it was removed from an exhibition on its opening day' (David and Rowe 2011). Why should Marion's 'point of birth', the emergence of the new person, evoke such reactions? Waller refers to a possible generational difference in attitude, from 'delighted new parents and health professionals' to a 'mature' woman who was offended and 'wouldn't have wanted her husband to see her like that,' and a few who scuttle past saying 'Is nothing sacred?' (Waller 2011, cited by David and Rowe 2011). Perhaps some people feel that birth is such a personal and mysterious event that it should not be subjected, through art, to public gaze. On the other hand, difficulties may arise because the paintings force a response to the reality of pain, blood, and female genitalia.

Rare depictions of the chain of events leading to birth are to be found in work by the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), whose interest in human development was informed by training she received as a pre-medical student (Gilbert and Brauckmann 2011, p. 225). The central part of the complex symbolic painting *Moses* (Kahlo 1945) has a womb with well-developed foetus; to the right and left are an egg surrounded by sperm, and a cell dividing; below is Moses in his basket on the river. More personally, in a painting of multiple portraits *My Grandparents, My Parents and I (Family Tree)* (Kahlo 1936), Kahlo painted herself three times, as an egg being fertilised by her father's sperm, as a foetus connected to her mother by an umbilical cord, and as a young naked girl. As for the actual moment of her birth, she imagined this in an earlier painting, *My Birth* (Kahlo 1932), in which an over-large head, identifiable as Kahlo from the eyebrows, is emerging onto a bloodied sheet. As well as birth, this painting paradoxically relates to two deaths, for it was begun following a miscarriage and completed after her mother's death. In addition to breaking taboos about showing female genitalia and vaginal blood, Kahlo 'blasphemously' has a portrait of the Mater Dolorosa on the wall behind the bed (Ankori 2005, p. 38). The mother's face is covered, perhaps because it represents both Kahlo's mother and herself (Barson 2005, pp. 56-57).

Moving from the beginning of life to the end, death paintings depict a range of responses, from scientific curiosity to denial. Around 1508, Leonardo da Vinci wrote about a hospital visit where the artistic outcome was anatomical drawings of a dissection:

And this old man, a few hours before his death, told me that he had passed 100 years, and that he was conscious of no failure of body, except feebleness. And thus sitting upon a bed in the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova at Florence, without any untoward movement or sign, he passed away from this life. And I made an anatomy of him to see the cause of a death so sweet...(da Vinci Windsor 19027v, cited by Wells and Crowe 2004, p. 932).

A different depiction of the intersecting of art and science, the act of dissection itself, was the subject of *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp* (Rembrandt 1632), commissioned by the Amsterdam Guild of Surgeons and

painted by Rembrandt as a group portrait. Seven onlookers on the left are concentrating on the centrally placed corpse of Adriaen het Kint, an armed robber who was hanged earlier on the same day. On the right stands Dr Tulp, using forceps to lift up an arm muscle, and it has been suggested from a surgeon's point of view that he is giving a lesson on the flexing of fingers (Hove *et al* 2008).

British portraitist Daphne Todd (1947-) won the BP Portrait prize in 2010 for her realistic, unsentimental, and intimate *Last Portrait of Mother* (Todd 2009). The emaciated 100-year old body, propped up on pillows, still bears a hospital wristband. Todd accepted that some might find it shocking, with the 'mouth hanging open, eyes peeping from frigid lids, arms thin and dry' (Jones 2010), and that voyeurism might be a concern:

I think they have a point in a way. We all hope our remains are going to be treated respectfully, and I can imagine that some people will think this is not respectful. There are all sorts of issues about death that are swept under the carpet. No one really accepts that it really happens to each and every one of us and that it is happening all the time.  
(Todd 2010, cited by Brown 2010, p. 20).

Though painted as a 'devotional study' with her mother's agreement given in advance, Todd acknowledges that some family members were 'upset' and 'uncomfortable' (Brown 2010, p. 20). Equally unsentimental, and as such challenging 19<sup>th</sup> century conventions about death-bed representations, is a portrait by the French Impressionist Claude Monet (1840-1926), *Camille on her Death Bed* (Monet 1879). His wife Camille died on 5 September 1879 'after the most ghastly suffering' (Monet 1879, cited by Barnes 1990a, p. 34), and painting her seems to have been the response which came naturally:

...I caught myself, with my eyes focused on her tragic temples, in the act of automatically searching for the succession, the arrangement of coloured gradations that death was imposing on her motionless face. Blue, yellow, grey tones, who knows what else? That was the point I had reached. Nothing is more natural than the urge to record one last image of a person departing this life. But even before I had the idea of recording those features to which I was so profoundly attached, my organism was already reacting to the colour sensations, and, in spite of myself, I was being involved by my reflexes in an unconscious process in which I was resuming the course of my daily life.  
(Monet, cited by Barnes 1990a, p. 34).

In contrast, *Venetia, Lady Digby, on her Deathbed* (van Dyck 1633) appears to be asleep rather than dead. The famously beautiful Venetia died unexpectedly during the night of 30 April 1633, aged 33, and with an autopsy pending the distraught Sir Kenelm Digby wanted her to be portrayed. He asked his friend Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641), Flemish artist and court painter in England, who arrived two days later. Venetia's cheeks were rubbed to try and bring colour into them, and van Dyck sensitively painted her with head resting in hand, peaceful, dreaming perhaps. Sir Kenelm kept the portrait by him day and night, wrote that this 'is the Master peece of all the excellent ones that ever Sir Anthony Vandike made' (Dulwich Picture Gallery 2009), and 'occasionally saw her beckon to him' (Schama 2015, p. 134).

Diverse painters who recorded the First World War have already been discussed in the previous chapter, but with respect to portraiture it remains to consider the faceless who were brought back, 'missing ears, noses, whole jaws; gaping eye sockets; chunks of skull blown away', at least sixty thousand of them (Schama 2015, pp. 524, 529). Henry Tonks (1862-1937) was a British surgeon and artist who became Slade Professor of Fine Art, 1918-1930, and during the war he worked with the Royal Army Medical Corps in the team of surgeon Harold Gillies, making drawings and pastel portraits to record injuries and the results of reconstructive surgery. This necessarily involved direct encounters with patients, persons from whom the majority recoiled because of their terrible mutilations, many of whom despaired feeling they would never be accepted as normal persons again. Tonks eschewed 'all possibility of public viewing' (Schama 2015, p. 531), but during the prolonged one hundredth anniversary commemorations of the First World War, a number of these images have been published. For example, the progress of Private Walter Ashworth (Tonks 1916-1917) is depicted and described in Schama (2015, pp. 532-535), and there are four portraits by Tonks in *The Great War in Portraits* (Moorhouse and Faulks 2014, pp. 142-143).

More recently, the Scottish artist Mark Gilbert (1969-) was painter in residence for two years at the Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Unit of St Bartholemew's and the Royal London Hospital, led by consultant surgeon Iain Hutchison. Gilbert was invited to illustrate the possibilities of modern facial surgery and to show that people with disfigurements are able to enjoy fulfilled lives. In fulfilling this commission he was able to go further than Tonks usually could in having a fully consensual relationship with his subjects and showing direct eye contact in his portraits. He did not use photographs: 'Whereas a photograph shows just one quick image of a person, which can be very stark, portraits are an opportunity to show a person in more depth, to emphasise what is interesting and charismatic about them' (Gilbert, cited by Neustatter 2000). This is exemplified by a portrait (Gilbert 1999) of the remarkable Henry de Lotbinière (1945-2002), half his face missing after fifteen operations for cancer, but wearing his wig and robes as a barrister who continued to go into court for as long as he could. Psychologist Paul Farrand found that 'sitting for, and seeing, their portraits has had a cathartic effect on many of the cancer and trauma patients, allowing them to come to terms with their altered appearance more rapidly' (National Portrait Gallery 2002). Patients unanimously agreed that that they would like their portraits to be exhibited 'in an attempt to educate the public to see the person beyond the appearance' (Edkins 2015, p. 156) and the result was the *Saving Faces* exhibition which toured the UK finishing at the National Portrait Gallery in 2002.

## 6.5 Sinners and saints

Continuing with portraits at the extremes, this section considers diverse ways in which artists have attempted to depict evil, and then moves to icons as doorways into the communion of saints.

I've always been interested in how you identify the criminal in terms of image. People will say, you could see he was the killer. I don't believe that [...] When

I saw a color photograph [of Theo Van Gogh's murderer], I saw this softness that reminded me of some cliché pictures of Jesus Christ.'  
(Dumas, cited by Berwick 2008).

Marlene Dumas (1953-) is a South African born painter who has been based in the Netherlands since 1976. Her self-portrait *Evil is Banal* (Dumas 1984) shows a somewhat smudged face with shoulder-length orange hair, chin resting on hand, turned round looking over the back of a seat. The title comes from Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Arendt 2006, first published 1963), which concerned the trial of Adolf Eichmann and raised unsettling questions about how 'ordinary' evil may become. Dumas' portrait does not convey the sense of an evil presence but that is making a point; for she was comparing South Africa under the apartheid regime with Nazi Germany (Bedford 2013, p. 36) and felt helpless, complicit. 'In August 1976, I left for overseas [...] The townships were burning. Yet I felt totally incapable and inadequate to address the political system of Apartheid in my work' (Dumas 2014, cited by Coelewijn *et al* 2014, p. 17).

She also wrote:

I have not come  
to propagate freedom.  
I have come to show the disease symptoms  
of my time.  
I am a good example of everything  
that is wrong with my time.  
(Dumas 1986, cited by Bedford 2013, p. 36).

Unlike *Evil is Banal*, some portraits provoke outrage because of what viewers already know or think they know. A notable example by the British artist Marcus Harvey (1963-) is *Myra* (Harvey 1995), a portrait of Myra Hindley, accomplice of child murderer Ian Brady during the 1960's. The two buried their five victims, aged between ten and seventeen, on Saddleworth Moor in Yorkshire and hence were known as the Moors Murderers. Hindley received two concurrent sentences of life imprisonment on 6 May 1966, and died in prison in November 2002 (Lee 2011, pp. 277, 9). Harvey's huge portrait, 320 x 396 cm, was based on a police photograph showing a hard-



faced Myra with blonde bouffant hair, widely published by the press and hence well known by the British public. For Harvey, 'the whole point of the painting is the photograph. That photograph. The iconic power that has come to it as a result of years of obsessive media reproduction' (Harvey, cited by Burn 1997). It is indeed 'that photograph', so publicly linked with the person described among other things as 'the embodiment of female evil' (Birch 1995), which can be seen in the portrait when viewed from a distance. However, close up it is found to be pixelated, with each pixel comprising a child's handprint produced in black, grey or white acrylic paint using a plaster cast. 'I just thought that the hand-print was one of the most dignified images that I could find. The most simple image of innocence absorbed in all that pain' (Harvey, cited by Burn 1997). *Myra* was enormously controversial when exhibited in the 1997 *Sensation* exhibition at the Royal Academy, and was seriously vandalised.

The approach of irony was used by two Russian Jews now living in New York, Vitaly Komar (1943-) and Alexander Melamid (1945-), in their clandestine portrait of the ruthless dictator Joseph Stalin, *The Origins of Socialist Realism* (Komar and Melamid 1982-1983). They started collaborating in 1972, initiating 'Sotsart' which followed Soviet official optimistic realism, 'but with a literalist enthusiasm that jars. In its ironic over-eagerness, it undermines what it purportedly celebrates' (Julius 2001, p. 23). In the idol-breaking painting, Stalin is sitting and enjoying the attentions of the Muse of painting, who is stroking Stalin's chin with her right hand. With her left, she is originating Socialist Realist art by tracing his profile (Julius 2001, p.19). Here is a visual example of what Lynch (1973) calls the ironic imagination, the bringing together of contrary elements in unexpected ways, a type of imagination also to be found in the teachings of Jesus (Lynch 1973, pp. 84-85).

On the one hand there are these and other images which evoke evil in various ways; on the other hand there are liturgical icons seen by Orthodox Christianity as doors or gates 'leading us into the communion of saints' (Ware 2011, p. xvii). As mentioned in Chapter 2, icons in this sense are

related to the phenomenological concept of icons described by Marion, but are not equivalent. Liturgical icons have already been encountered in Chapters 3 and 4 with respect to landscapes and biblical subjects respectively; here the consideration is portraits of saints. Hart (2011, p. 34) stresses the importance of striving to know the saint as deeply as possible, through research into his or her life including previous images, for in this way ‘the painter will make an image of someone whom they know and love.’ Moreover, the icon has to be a recognisable image: ‘The icon’s venerability resides not in the value of its materials [...] but in its image-ness’ (Hart 2014, p. 19). In some cases, recognisability will be achieved through maintaining traditional features and conventions, ‘the received “likeness”’ (Hart 2011, p. 36); with more recent saints it may be possible to work from eye-witness descriptions or photographs.

As a beginner, I produced an icon of St Francis (1182-1226), Figure 6.1 (Baker 2013) over a period of two weeks at an icon-painting retreat based in a Franciscan convent in Assisi. The processes included traditional techniques of egg tempera and oil gilding, daily *lectio divina* and meditation, submersion in the life of St Francis through spending quiet time at sites significant in his life, and visits to the Basilica di San Francesco where he is buried, to see the frescoes of his life attributed to Giotto. The icon is based on a 13<sup>th</sup> century image, a detail from *St Francis with Scenes from his Life* attributed to Coppo di Marcovaldo, in the Bardi Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence. It includes two iconographical traditions, the stigmata and the holding of the gospel book, which can be traced back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century biography of St Francis by Thomas of Celano (Stracke 2013). Following the typology of Section 2.2, my experience started with the triggering of intentionality [A] by curiosity about the processes of icon painting, followed by essential givens from an iconographer concerning the practicalities of various traditional techniques. There were many other givens both from meditation and site visits; these amounted to returning to the source [C], in other words returning as far as possible to St. Francis’ life. Especially memorable was the sense of presence at La Verna Franciscan Sanctuary on



Figure 6.1

*St Francis  
of Assisi*  
2013

Egg tempera  
and gold leaf  
on wood panel

31 x 20 cm

the forested slopes of a mountain in the Tuscan Apennines, the place where according to tradition St. Francis received the stigmata. Having worked through a disciplined system of stages, the mystery of appearance [F], in the form of the iconic counter-gaze, was the culmination of the process rather than an intermediate given.

Between doorways to the communion of saints and evocations of evil lies a multitude of portraits, some of them raising questions about iconicity and as such of interest to subsequent analysis. Three such will be examined briefly in chronological order. First, the German Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer

(1471-1528) painted a controversial *Self-Portrait* (Dürer 1500), with a compelling gaze, long wavy centre-parted hair, beard and moustache, the whole suffused in a golden glow. He looks as many people might imagine Jesus to look, but in spite of much debate Dürer's intention is not known. This portrait has been kissed, worshipped, accused of self-love and sacrilege; and an unidentified person tried to put out its eyes in the Munich museum in 1905. In other words, on the one hand it has been treated like an icon and on the other hand there have been objections to bestowing such a status upon it. 'The more one contemplates this painting [...] the more it seems to be poised in perfect tension between icon and portrait' (Cumming 2010, p. 47). Second, *King Charles I* (Anon, late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century) is a posthumous portrait by an unknown artist of the last saint to be canonised by the Church of England. A heavenly hand emerging from a cloud holds a crown from which golden light rays are shining; there are also golden rays emanating from Charles' head. The painting includes a scroll with the words *Corruptibilem pro Incorruptibile*, recollecting the words spoken by Charles at his execution 'I go from a corruptible to an incorruptible crown' (National Portrait Gallery 2016a). It seems that the picture is meant to be venerated. Third, there is an unfinished portrait by the British painter Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830) of *William Wilberforce* (Lawrence 1828), one of the first paintings acquired by the National Portrait Gallery. The mature Wilberforce (1759-1833), philanthropist and campaigner for the abolition of slavery, is leaning informally to one side, and his face has been said to capture 'the intellectual power and winning sweetness of the veteran statesman' (National Portrait Gallery 2016b).

## 6.6 Phenomenological analysis

Following on from the question 'What is a person?' raised in Section 6.2, and the various types of relationship which have emerged in the preceding three sections, relational aspects will be addressed here in the context of givenness from subjects as received and used by the painter. Apparent realism in representational portraiture is no guarantee that personal givens

from the subject have been fully appreciated or depicted by the painter or are shining through the portrait to the viewer. In addition to satisfying the requirements of those paying for the work, influences which may intervene, as identified in Section 6.3, include the cultural climate of the time, for example resulting in idealisation of female portraits in Renaissance Italy; and physiognomic or other theories espoused by the painter. Also, models may be used to pursue ideas such as allegories, so limiting what the models are giving of themselves. In other words, there are a variety of reasons why subjects may have been encountered or portrayed as common rather than saturated phenomena, and one possible outcome is that the resulting pictures may lack vitality and bore the viewer (Schama 2015, p. xxiii). In other cases compelling paintings are produced through the power of the artist's own vision, with the models being used as a means to an end rather than subjects in their own right.

Personal encounter may be examined phenomenologically by making a connection between Marion's concept of the saturated phenomenon and the *I-Thou* relationship of Buber, following the argument of the American philosopher Brian Harding that the *I-Thou* relationship 'is necessary and sufficient for a saturated phenomenon' (Harding 2013, p. 295). Buber said 'There is no *I* taken in itself, but only the *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* and the *I* of the primary word *I-It*' (Buber 1958, p. 16). The *Du* in the original German is translated as *Thou* rather than *You* to show that the pronoun is both singular and indicates familiarity (McGrath 1997, p. 246). The primary word *I-Thou* is inherently relational and 'can be spoken only with the whole being [...] I become through my relation to the *Thou*; as I become *I*, I say *Thou*' (Buber 1958, pp. 24-25). Relationship to the *Thou* is direct, with no intervening 'system of ideas'; and it precedes recognition by the person that he or she is an *I* (Buber 1958, pp. 25, 37). It is only after such recognition that the primary word *I-It* becomes possible, when the self-conscious *I* perceives, feels, imagines and thinks of other things as separate objects, 'the realm of *It*' (Buber 1958, pp. 16, 38-39). *I-Thou*, with its complete lack of intervening ideas, theories or plans about painting a person, corresponds to direct relationship and the pure reception of what is given; however, *I-It must*

intervene if a picture is to be painted at all, because of requirements of the painting process such as observation of shapes and colours and decisions about composition. However, there could be continuing alternation between *I-Thou* and *I-It* during the process, a possibility recognised in more general terms by Buber (1958, pp. 31-32).

Questions about asymmetry and reciprocity were raised by Levinas, who was critical about what he saw as the symmetry of Buber's *I-Thou* relationship. This may 'be read indifferently from either side' (Levinas 1989, p. 72), whereas for Levinas the encounter with the Other is ethical and asymmetrical:

I think rather that access to the face is straightaway ethical. You turn yourself toward the Other as toward an object when you see a nose, eyes, a forehead, a chin, and you can describe them. The best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the color of his eyes! When one observes the color of the eyes one is not in social relationship with the Other. The relation with the face can surely be dominated by perception, but what is specifically the face is what cannot be reduced to that.

There is first the very uprightness of the face, its upright exposure, without defense. The skin of the face is that which stays most naked, most destitute. It is the most naked, though with a decent nudity. It is the most destitute also: there is an essential poverty in the face: the proof of this is that one tries to mask this poverty by putting on poses, by taking on a countenance. The face is exposed, menaced, as if inviting us to an act of violence. At the same time, the face is what forbids us to kill.

The analysis of the face such as I have just made, with the mastery of the Other and his poverty, with my submission and my wealth, is primary. Levinas (1985, pp. 85-86, 89).

The encounter is asymmetrical, in short, because 'I am responsible for the Other without knowing that the other will reciprocate. Whether or not Others reciprocate is their affair not mine' (Lindahl 2002).

In suggesting that Buber's *I-Thou* relationship is necessary for saturation, Harding (2013, p. 309) points to reciprocity between the saturated phenomenon and the recipient of what is given. He suggests that Levinas misunderstands what Buber means by reciprocity, for unlike Levinas, Buber's understanding is phenomenological rather than ethical and is not

limited to human beings. For example, it is concluded in Chapter 3 of this thesis that nature is a saturated phenomenon, or collection of saturated phenomena, which raises the question - can nature be a *Thou*? The word seems to imply a person, but Buber's example of a tree demonstrates that his thinking goes wider. A tree can be looked at in various ways as an object, but it can also come about, 'if I have both will and grace, that in considering the tree I become bound up in relation to it. The tree is now no longer *It*' (Buber 1958, pp. 19-20). *I-Tree* has become a reciprocal relationship, but not one which may 'be read indifferently from either side' to repeat Levinas' words. *Any* phenomenon can be saturated if the relationship is *I-Thou* whereas no phenomenon is saturated if the relationship is *I-It*. 'The given *per se* is not constituted by the I, but the degree of givenness (ranging from impoverishment to saturation) is influenced by the willingness of the I to receive the given' (Harding 2013, p. 309).

However, the above type of relationship and the Levinasian are not mutually exclusive, and it is important that Levinas alerts us to the possibility of asymmetrical ethical encounter in painter-subject relationships. This may be illustrated by analysing Francis Bacon's reliance on photographs and memory rather than painting directly from faces, as mentioned in Section 6.3. He was questioned about this by David Sylvester:

DS...what if someone you've already painted many times from memory and photographs sits for you?

FB ...They inhibit me because, if I like them, I don't want to practise before them the injury that I do to them in my work. I would rather practise the injury in private by which I think I can record the fact of them more clearly.

(Interview 1966, cited by Sylvester 1993, p. 41).

This may be interpreted in Levinasian terms. The injury which Bacon referred to is the deliberate distortion of subjects in his portraits; in other words he did violence to his subjects and hence was reluctant to look them in the face whilst painting. A down to earth response to such portraits from Bacon's lover and model, the handsome former petty criminal George Dyer,

is reported by the art historian Michael Peppiatt (2016, p. 126): 'I fink they're fuckin' 'orrible.'

A rather different sort of encounter which wounded both painter and subject was that between the British artist Graham Sutherland (1903-1980) and Winston Churchill. Sutherland was commissioned to paint the portrait as Parliament's gift to celebrate Churchill's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1954, to be presented in a televised ceremony in Westminster Hall. 'How will you paint me [...] the bulldog or the cherub?' said Churchill; 'That depends entirely on what you show me...sir,' replied Sutherland (Schama 2015, p. 1). What was shown, the givenness, was painted truthfully by Sutherland and it was 'a magnificent ruin' of a man (Cooke 2015, reporting on Schama's television series *The Face of Britain*). Churchill hated the portrait, it was received with 'uproarious hilarity' at the presentation, Sutherland was mortified, and the painting was quietly committed to a bonfire by the Churchills' private secretary. Only a photograph remains of the finished picture, but there is a preparatory study in the National Portrait Gallery (Sutherland 1954). Schama suggests that none of Sutherland's subsequent portraits had the uncompromising truthfulness of the Churchill. 'It was as though, deeply scarred by the disaster, Sutherland had decided to study not just what he saw in front of him [...] but the inner perception his sitters had of their own presence' (Schama 2015, pp. 17-18, 21). It follows that a tension may be experienced by the painter between responding to the truth of what is given and ethical reluctance to hurt the sitter's feelings.

Returning to the use of photographs, as Francis Bacon appreciated, there is a difference between using photographs taken as part of a personal encounter and photographs sourced in another way. Nevertheless, even when the painter has not met the subject, a single photograph may sometimes be experienced as saturated, and trigger the painting process. An unusual example is Marcus Harvey's reaction to the police photograph of Myra Hindley, suggesting that in this case the image conforms to Marion's 'idol' category of saturated phenomenon:



It's a terrifying image, and I realised I had been attracted to it lots of times, just pulled in by it. It's quite exciting, it's uncomfortable. I was very aware that the pull of the image was a sexual thing and that that is part of the taboo that increases its appeal. (Harvey 1997, cited by Burn 1997).

This type of reaction has its dangers because it is almost inevitable that the artist will miss some qualities which may be seen by someone else. When the Catholic Lord Longford, believing in the possibility of redemption, controversially visited Myra Hindley in 1968, he found that she was 'totally unlike that picture of her with blonde hair and staring eyes that appears in all the papers' (Longford, cited by Lee 2011, p. 289).

Portrait painting can also be idolatrous in Marion's sense if the process is functioning at least partially as a mirror, in other words if the artist's ideas, theories or self-image are being reflected back. A complex example may be found by returning to Manet's portrait of Antonin Proust (1880). It has been pointed out by Armstrong (2002, pp. 307-312) that in many ways it resembles the portrait of Manet painted in 1867 by his friend Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904). Against a featureless brown background the bearded Manet is smartly dressed and top-hatted, has one glove on and one off, and is holding a cane; however Manet is looking at the viewer less directly and less confidently than Proust. Whilst Manet's depiction of Proust is not actually a self-portrait, Armstrong suggests that it was perhaps the way Manet wanted to look and that it 'entered into dialogue' with Fantin-Latour's earlier painting of Manet. Hence 'a triangular relationship of painter, painter, and painted is formed', and Manet located himself here, rather than in the 'one-to-one equivalence between a man and his mirror', which Manet tended to avoid (Armstrong 2002, pp. 308-309).

Painters such as Lucian Freud and Frank Auerbach are likely to absorb many givens from their subjects because of the sheer amount of time spent getting to know them. The resulting portraits may perhaps be compared with Cézanne's later landscapes as discussed in Chapter 3, for there is movement and dynamism in a single painting, resulting from the incorporation of temporal changes. In such cases the subject has been

experienced as the event type of saturated phenomenon. Among other ways of depicting event in portraiture, one approach is multiple paintings of the same subject, comparable with William Heaton Cooper's series of the Langdale Pikes described in Section 3.3. An example is Picasso's portrait series of his companion Fernande Olivier, more than sixty representations produced during 1909, experimental and going hand-in-hand with the birth of Cubism (Weiss *et al* 2003). There is also the 'time-lapse' approach already mentioned in Chapter 4 with reference to some paintings and icons of biblical narratives; in portraiture Marcel Duchamp broke new ground with time-lapse depiction in his controversial *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2* (Duchamp 1912). Its overlapping images went beyond the Cubism of the time by attempting to plot the successive phases of a person in motion.

Birth and death are also of the event type of saturated phenomenon; both in their own ways are constitutive of persons, that is, they give us to ourselves, and both have been painted. Yet the reception of such paintings indicates that in this area artists may be pushing at boundaries and are confronting at least some viewers with realities which they would prefer to avoid. Why should Marion's 'point of birth', the emergence of the new person, evoke such reactions? Is there more to this than a reaction against pain, blood, and the display of female genitalia? (David and Rowe 2011).

Marion, in referring to birth as 'pure event, unforeseeable, irrepeatable, exceeding all cause', refers briefly to its proceeding from 'an indefinite series of events and of happenings' (Marion 2002b, pp. 42-43). It is this chain of events which confer the qualities he mentions, starting with a unique man and a unique woman coming together at a particular time and place. Millions of sperm, each with their own different genetic characteristics, race towards the egg and the winner fertilises it. The resulting cell divides and the embryo develops within the womb where its growth is influenced by the quality of the uterine environment. 'Exceeding all cause' sums up the impossibility of identifying a cause for anyone's unique birth, given the sheer number of variables. And from the point of birth 'the excess of intuition over intention bursts open irremediably' (Marion 2002b, p. 44). Some of Frida

Kahlo's self-portraiture may illustrate what Marion calls intentional aiming at one's birth, 'wanting to know who and from where I am'; and the filling of this aim with 'quasi-intuitions.' For one's birth is, uniquely, a phenomenon which is '*self-giving without self-showing*', in that 'I have never seen it with my own eyes' and it is 'accomplished without me and even, strictly speaking, before me' (Marion 2002b, pp. 41-43, Marion's italics).

Marion also discusses death as event, a passage which is not observed directly, in contrast to the two states which it traverses, being alive and being a corpse:

As a phenomenon, the death of the other person only lasts, therefore, the instant of a passage (even if the affectation of the funeral ceremony tries to make it last and must try to, precisely because the passage has not lasted more than an instant). (Marion 2002b, p. 39)

Marion is here implying the necessity of a process through which the bereaved may come to terms with their trauma and grow through it. However, if the death results in the loss of an 'anchor', an embodiment of security, 'the traumatic element in bereavement can then be characterized as symptomatic of withdrawal from idolatry [...] the bereaved needs to let the deceased die' (Harvey 1995, p. 16). Sir Kenelm Digby appears to have had difficulties here, with van Dyck's painting of Venetia on her deathbed being in effect an idol, in contrast to Daphne Todd's devotional study of her mother which clearly accepts the phenomenon of death.

Persons and their faces are flesh. Marion sees human specificity in terms of 'taking flesh', saying 'I do not give myself flesh; it gives me to myself in giving itself to me' (Marion 2002b, p. 99), including the experiences of suffering, pleasure and aging. This is consistent with the viewpoint expressed in Chapter 1, that our experiences cannot be separated from our biological make-up (flesh), which includes sensing organs and the brain structure and neurochemistry which enables us to feel and think. Marion goes on to say:

With flesh, it is a matter of the first and of the only saturated phenomenon, which delivers the *ego* to itself [...] It thus benefits from an incomparable

privilege over all other paradoxes. Those other ones designate each time what the *ego* cannot constitute as its object, as a consequence of the excess in the phenomena of donating intuition over all anterior intentional signification [...] Flesh gives, to the contrary, nothing other than the *ego* itself, at the same time that every given gives itself to it. (Marion 2002b, p. 100).

Marion, in developing his fourth type of saturated phenomenon, the icon, acknowledges his debt to Levinas for having determined for the first time ‘the mode of phenomenality proper to the face’, naked and defenseless as mentioned above. With this as his starting point, Marion’s aim is to advance a step beyond the ethical in thinking of the face as envisaging me, with the counter-gaze rising up in the void of the pupils:

What do we look at in the face of the other person? [...] the eyes - or more exactly the empty pupils of the person’s eyes, their black holes open on the somber ocular hollow. In other words, in the face we fix on the sole place where precisely nothing can be seen [...] The look of the other person, precisely because it cannot be looked at, irrupts in the visible. (Marion 2002b, pp. 115-116).

Before the icon, if I continue to look, I feel myself seen (I must feel myself thus in order for it to function effectively as an icon). Thus the image no longer creates a screen (or in the case of the idol, a mirror) since through it and under its features another gaze - invisible like all gazes - envisages me [...] As a result, what is at stake in the operation of the icon concerns not the perception of the visible or the aesthetic but the intersection of two gazes. (Marion 2004, pp. 59-60).

As identified in Section 2.5, it is this experience of the intersection of gazes which is crucial for Marion’s concept of the icon, and this takes us into the theological domain which is discussed in the next section, together with an examination of the relative status of liturgical icons and portraits in which counter-gazes arise.

## 6.7 Theological interpretation

Sir Thomas Lawrence’s portrait of *William Wilberforce* is an example of a portrait which has none of the conventional characteristics of a liturgical icon, yet which gazes upon the viewer with searching empathetic eyes in a radiant

face, suggesting a blurring of any distinction between such portraits and liturgical icons in terms of givenness. Further, some paintings, for example *King Charles 1<sup>st</sup>*, are intermediate in style and usage between portraits and liturgical icons. This observation is reminiscent of the conclusions of the American Byzantine and medieval art specialist Katherine Marsengill, who noted that in the Byzantine world portraits of the 'non-sainted' including both church and civic figures were used in churches. There was

...no clear dividing line between the icon and portrait in Byzantine conception [...] The development of the icon as a venerated portrait lies not merely in the domain of the official Church, but in the personal devotions and conceptions of viewers who perceived the holiness of the person portrayed and deemed him or her an acceptable link to spiritual forces beyond immediate reach. (Marsengill 2013, p. 300).

This is in accord with Marion's understanding that 'certain beings can pass from the idol to the icon, or from the icon to the idol, only changing thus in status *when venerated*' (Marion 2012, p. 8, my italics).

A contemporary Orthodox view concerning icons and portraits, following the British Orthodox scholar and theologian Philip Sherrard (1922-1995), is that some art is recognised as 'threshold art'; however, whilst this can bring us to 'the threshold of mystery' (Sherrard 1990, p. 16), it is 'not the same as a sacred work of art, which discloses the mystery itself and makes us share in it' (Justiniano (2016, p. 3). Threshold art is a concept used by Hart (2005, p. 8) in addressing contemporary 'gallery art'; he argues that some of this, whilst not liturgical, does 'stand on the threshold of the holy.' One of his examples is Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), whose aim was 'to paint men and women with that something of the eternal which the halo used to symbolize, and which we seek to confer by the actual radiance and vibration of our colourings' (van Gogh 1888, cited by Roskill 1983, p. 286). Hart also mentions the work of American abstract painter Mark Rothko (1903-1970) as an example of threshold art, and this is in accord with Rothko's own words when he said that his ideas for paintings were 'simply the doorway through which one left the world in which they occur' (Rothko, cited by Ashton 1984, p. 10). However, Rothko's familiar shimmering bands of colour, 'essays into

boundlessness' (Ashton 1984 p. 11), were a way of expression which he found by abandoning portraiture:

I belong to a generation that was interested in the human figure and I studied it. It is only unwillingly that I perceived that it was not responding to my needs. Whoever makes use of it, mutilates it [...] I have had to find another mode of expression. (Rothko 1958, cited by Marion 2002b, p. 75).

Marion (2002b, p. 78) was interested in this move and interpreted it as an ethical decision foreshadowing Levinas, in which (using the terminology of Levinas and Marion) Rothko chose not to kill the faces of others by painting what he realised would have been idols. He found his own abstract solution rather than take that other way of painting faces (Marion 2002b, p. 79), the way of the icon.

Icons in the liturgical sense are sacred art, painted within a rich tradition and according to well established principles and methods, including stages and layers of painting, with final facial and eye highlights. It is these final brush strokes which 'suggest the light of divine grace shining out from within the saint' (Hart 2011, p. 265). After days of work, tiny brush strokes in a relatively short time can effect 'the mystery of appearance', and in Marion's terms, intentionality is reversed. Is it not paradoxical that a carefully planned process can mysteriously evoke the divine light - surely the painter cannot be in control of such appearances? But in the case of icons the painter is not acting as an individualistic artist but is doing 'priestly work' (Ware 2011, p. xvii), prayerfully acting as a channel within and for the body of the church, with God the active agent (Sherrard 1990, p. 15). This concept of the icon excludes some portraits which in the phenomenological sense could be experienced as iconic.

Related to the concept of threshold art used by Hart, and likewise 'spiritually positive', is his suggestion for identifying 'an art of compassion' (Hart 2005, p. 8). His example of a painter producing such art is Rembrandt; examples emerging from this study include Henry Tonks and Mark Gilbert with their portrayals of severely disfigured people. Given the primacy of the face and

especially the eyes in the thought of Levinas and Marion, two questions arise when people cannot bear to look at the ravaged face. The first, after Levinas, is how can the virtual 'killing' of the person through being evaded be overcome? And the second, after Marion, is can a disfigured face be an icon phenomenologically? The answer is theological, with Hart's 'art of compassion' resonating with what Marion says about the revelatory power of love; and with the disfigured Servant of Yahweh being identified as originary:

Experiencing the infinite in the face of the other cannot be expressed in a formula. It is a behaviour that is experimentally verifiable: facing a face disfigured (by poverty, sickness, pain, etc.) or reduced to its extreme shapes (prenatal life, coma, agony etc.), I either cannot see it or am no longer able to recognize another for myself in it and continue on my way. Or I can still see in it what I do not see in it naturally - the absolute phenomenon of another center in the world, where my lookalike lives and whose look upon me allows me to live, thanks to him or her. But in this case, to see this invisible face, I must *love* it [...] Without the revelation of the transcendence of love, the phenomenon of the face, and thus of the other, simply cannot be seen. (Marion 2008, p. 74, Marion's italics).

The icon does not expect one to see it, but rather gives itself so that one might see or permit oneself to see through it [...] The question can henceforth be formulated as such: where to encounter, originally, an image that effaces its own visibility in order to allow itself to be pierced by another gaze? The answer is obvious: the Servant of Yahweh literally allows himself to be disfigured (shedding [*perdre*] the visible splendor of his own visage) in order to do the will of God (which will appear only in his actions). The Servant sacrifices his visage - he allows the effacement of his "image": "the multitudes were astonished at the sight of him; his form, disfigured, lost all human likeness; his appearance so changed he no longer looked like a man." (Marion 2004, p. 61; Isaiah 52:14).

There is another sort of effacement. In a small cave near Ephesus, side by side, are 6<sup>th</sup> century frescoes of St Thecla of Iconium<sup>17</sup> and St Paul (Anon 6<sup>th</sup> century b). They are of equal height and both have raised right hands, hence iconographically they were meant to be of equal apostolic status and authority. Later, someone disagreed, for Thecla's eyes and right hand have been scratched out, signifying that the original artist's representation of equality has been overtaken by the view that church leadership should be male (Crossan and Read 2005, p. xii-xiii). Here is a striking example of an

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<sup>17</sup> St Thecla is of personal interest as a medieval reliquary ascribed to her was discovered in Ruyton-XI-Towns, Shropshire.

iconoclastic attack; others mentioned above are the attempt to put out the eyes of Dürer's self- portrait, the splattering of ink and an egg over *Myra*, and, more subtle, the use of irony to debunk Stalin. Iconoclastic attacks have occurred frequently throughout history (Williams 2013, p. 66), attesting in particular to the power of images of the human face and eyes, and the urge to take control by breaking them. This is sometimes done on God's behalf by those keen to uphold the second commandment against the making of idols (Exodus 20: 4), a possible motivation for the Dürer attack.

St Thecla also exemplifies the power and importance of personal devotion and veneration in establishing icons of saints, for there are many icons of her even though she may never have existed (Barrier 2009, p. 10). Her experiences as described in the second century *Acts of Thecla* are extremely colourful, for example she baptised herself in a pool where seals were about to devour her. She became a very popular saint in medieval times, especially for women (Ehrman 2005, pp. 113, 120), which suggests that whether or not she was historical, as a powerful woman of independent mind she was fulfilling a devotional need. What is going on when an icon of a legendary rather than a 'real' person is venerated and acts as a channel to 'the communion of saints'? St Thecla is by no means the only one; perhaps the most astounding is the dog-headed icon of St. Christopher. Pageau (2013, pp. 6, 11) offers the interpretation that dog-headed men represent ultimate foreigners, 'those living on the edge of the world', and this points to the foreigner as 'the vehicle for the advancing of the Church to the ends of the Earth.' More generally, these examples suggest that Hart's injunction to iconographers to strive to know the saint deeply, as I did in Assisi, is not all of the story. The other part of the tradition is the representation of areas of concern through the constituting imagination of the worshipper.

As will be developed in Chapter 8, Marion's approach to revelation can usefully start with his observation that it *imposes novelty* in areas including the sciences and arts, and 'first and foremost, in a religious happening' (Marion 2016, p. 4). The processes of painting persons can be revelatory in a number of ways which resonate with these different channels, which lie



either side of the traditional problem-ridden divide between natural and revealed theology. For example, novelty through the channel of science may be discerned in the case of Leonardo da Vinci, through art with Francis Bacon, and through religious happening with Aidan Hart, three painters with diverse religious views.

It has been suggested that Leonardo's theological context was Augustine's *City of God*, which he is known to have possessed (Syson and Keith 2011, p. 136), and in which Augustine's words can be seen as an invitation to study the human form. After having summarised human characteristics such as arrangement of the sense organs, erect posture, and mobility of tongue and hands, Augustine writes:

And is not this sufficient indication that a body of this kind was designed as an adjunct to the soul? And does it not show the character of the soul it serves? And even if we take out of account the necessary functions of the parts, there is a harmonious congruence between them, a beauty in their equality and correspondence, so much so that one would be at a loss to say whether utility or beauty is the major consideration in their creation.

This would be more apparent to us if we were aware of the precise proportions in which the components are combined and fitted together; *and it may be that human wit could discover these proportions, if it set itself to the task, in the exterior parts which are clearly visible.*

Augustine (2003, pp. 1073-1074, my italics. First published 427).

Augustine goes on to suggest that the parts hidden from view, such as veins and internal organs, are 'beyond discovery', a view transcended by Leonardo's numerous anatomical studies such as the dissection of the old man mentioned in Section 6.4. His drawings and writing suggest that these and other practical investigations, original scientific research as we might call it today, led him to see the profundity and beauty of nature in terms of cause and effect, explicable in physical terms. This was an essential corollary to his painting. Whilst doubts have been raised about the nature of Leonardo's Christian beliefs as mentioned in Section 4.6, it seems that science in general, and the structure and functioning of the human body in particular, were revelatory to him. However, the revelation of *love* as emphasised

above by Marion is difficult to appreciate in some of Leonardo's portraits of the grotesque faces which fascinated him.

Francis Bacon, as a militant atheist, seems an unlikely candidate for revelatory experience, yet more than most artists he spoke of 'the mystery of appearance':

...most of the time I simply don't know what I'm doing. I just get the bits of paint down and hope they suggest a way I can make something that looks as if it's come directly off the nervous system. And if it comes at all, it usually comes very quickly and by a kind of accident. I might be working and thinking "Oh my God, this is awful" and put the brush right through the image I've been trying to make and, every now and then, just by chance, with the fluidity of oil paint, that gesture will suggest the image I've been looking for all along. (Bacon 1963, cited by Peppiatt 2016, p. 31).

My own experience as described in Section 2.2 is also that an apparently accidental appearance may determine the subsequent progress of the painting; and together with evidence from Bacon and others this leads to the suggestion of revelation through the painting process itself. However, the revelation needs to be recognised and interpreted to be subsequently used, so needs to go hand in hand with some sort of pre-existing aim as implied in the above quotation from Bacon, and/or be taken up as fuel by the imagination. In turn this process draws upon the painter's previous experience, and in Bacon's case the revelation was often turned to distorted heads including screaming Popes. *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (Bacon 1953) is interpreted by Arya (2009) as Bacon's attack upon the conflated divine Father and biological father for undermining his identity by opposing his sexuality; coupled with disgust at religious institutions, particularly Catholicism. 'The Pope screams as his public persona disintegrates, which in turn signifies his own demise' (Arya 2009, p. 48). Notwithstanding his atheism, a sense of ambivalence arises because of Bacon's reliance on Christian imagery in his work, with recurring Crucifixion themes as well as the Pope series. Ambivalence continues into his final work, *Study of a Bull* (Bacon 1991), painted with the knowledge that he will soon die, and incorporating dust from his South Kensington studio; the painting 'could be a bull backing into a burning, black void or one escaping

from it, moving hopefully into the heavenly light' (Brown 2016). It can, perhaps, be seen as a self-portrait.

Marion's category of revelation through religious happening is exemplified by the work of Aidan Hart, which includes numerous icons of saints (Hart 2016). Orthodox theology understands the icon as a form of revelation comparable with the Holy Scriptures, and hence the liturgical work of the iconographer is the transmission of revelation (Ouspensky and Lossky 1982, p. 30), with God the active agent. As explained by Hart (see Section 6.5), the iconographer seeks to know and love the saint whose image is being made, in other words, a personal encounter is sought as part of the revelatory process.

This is reminiscent of Buber's *I-Thou* relationship and its interpretation as a saturated phenomenon as discussed in the previous section. Further, Buber went on to say: 'Every particular *Thou* is a glimpse through to the eternal *Thou*; by means of every particular *Thou* the primary word addresses the eternal *Thou*' (Buber 1958, p. 99). Buber's language was subsequently used by the Protestant theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968); however Barth differs from Buber in ascribing the *I-Thou* relationship as 'first constitutive for God, and then for man created by God' (Barth 2004, pp. 184-185). He pointed out that the immediate biblical amplification of 'Let us make humankind in our image' is 'male and female he created them' (Genesis 1: 27), implying that the analogy between God and humans is 'the existence of the I and the Thou' in self-encounter and discovery, co-operation, reciprocity and confrontation. This view interprets the *imago Dei* as both the *I-Thou* relationship between human beings and God, *and* between different human beings (Middleton 2005, p. 23).

Recent publications have emphasised the *imago Dei* as *imago Trinitatis* and the relevance of trinitarian relationality for human life (Chalamet and Vial 2014, p. 5). A number of connections with anthropology have been made, for example Pérez stressed the importance of reciprocity and love in the concept of the person, 'be it in trinitarian theology *or the domain of*

*anthropology*' (Pérez 2012, p. 125, my italics). Indeed, it has been suggested that there is 'a specific hermeneutical circle between theology and anthropology' (Maspero and Woźniak 2012, p. viii), though I suggest that this process is open-ended and better expressed as a hermeneutical spiral than a circle. Overall, the above-mentioned literature therefore includes Buber's anthropological starting point, Barth's theological starting point, and Maspero and Woźniak's anthropological and theological viewpoints circling or spiralling round each other in a mutually informative way. This last way of looking at the *imago Trinitatis* is consistent with the mutual spiralling of phenomenology and theology in this thesis.

In terms of practical application, the American Catholic theologian Catharine Mowry LaCugna (1952-1997) made a significant contribution to the revitalization of trinitarian theology, believing that it should revolutionise our views about God, ourselves, and the form of God's economy:<sup>18</sup>

*Entering into the life of God means entering in the deepest possible way into the economy, into the life of Jesus Christ, into the life of the Spirit, into the life of others [...] Living according to God's economy means adhering to the providential ordering of all things which originate in God, are sustained in existence by God, and are destined for eternal life with God. Entering into divine life therefore is impossible unless we also enter into a life of love and communion with others.* (LaCugna 1993 pp. 382-383, LaCugna's italics).

The interrelationships indicated by LaCugna are set aside by Marion when he identifies persons as 'flesh', the absolute type of saturated phenomenon as described in Section 2.5. Yet the humanly functioning flesh he refers to could not exist without interrelationality, including conception and foetal development as depicted by Frida Kahlo, the birth process itself as painted by Ghislaine Howard and Jonathan Waller, and the loving nurture of children. Such examples are from the sphere of phenomenological anthropology, they do not depend on theological identification and analysis to be real, yet surely they may participate in and help to inform our

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<sup>18</sup> The economic Trinity is understood as God's activity including His salvific self-communication through Christ and the Holy Spirit, in contrast to the immanent Trinity understood as the self-relatedness of Father, Son and Spirit (LaCugna 1993, p. 2).

understanding of the *imago Trinitatis*. The same may be said of the work of Henry Tonks and Mark Gilbert, who painted disfigured people as described in Section 6.4. Tonks' portraits imply an 'intimate visual-tactile encounter' (Biernoff 2010) and many of Gilbert's subjects 'developed a rapport' with him (Facial Surgery Research Foundation 2013), in other words these artists entered into empathetic and life-giving relationships.

In the following Chapter 7, the subject of interrelationships in painting processes is extended through practical community and collaborative projects, consonant with LaCugna's approach. These provide examples of what people including schoolchildren in a rural English parish wanted to express about their lives, and they make further contributions to the trinitarian hermeneutical spiral.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE THIRD SPIRAL (2): GIVENS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE AND COMMUNAL PAINTING

#### 7.1 Another dimension

The third or 'persons' spiral in *The Three Spirals* model was explored in the previous chapter in terms of portraiture, including discussion of interpersonal relationships between painters and subjects. A different type of relationality is investigated here, involving the production of pictures by groups rather than individual artists. Specifically, experiments with communal painting projects were carried out in a rural English parish, using the approaches of 'street art', and 'focus group with artist.' These were organised through the Church of England in the spirit of the parish or communal church model, in which the church is seen as conterminous with the village and concerned with reaching out to all local people (Russell 1986, pp. 257-259). Both projects started life in response to situations in the parish as described in subsequent sections; so as research into painting processes they arose serendipitously and have the advantage of being embedded in community life. Methods and the responses of participants are described, and phenomenological analysis augments Marion by drawing from Bakhtin's work on the dialogic imagination and the dialogical phenomenology of the contemporary American philosopher Beata Stawarska. The nature of participants' imagination is analysed with reference to Kant, the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), and Jean Piaget (1896-1980), a Swiss psychologist who pioneered child development studies. Theological interpretation includes the relationality of group working as the *imago Trinitatis*, the appearance of Christian symbolism in communal pictures, and discernment of how children's views develop about God, good and evil, and the hope of world harmony.

## 7.2 The street art approach

This project was carried out in St John the Baptist churchyard, Ruyton-XI-Towns, Shropshire, UK, with the aims of producing a large communal picture, encouraging and facilitating contributions from all interested individuals and groups, and incorporating the process within church activities as appropriate. The background is that a disability access pathway system encompassing various parts of the churchyard was established in 2008; following this, the number of visitors increased, and the churchyard came to be seen as a resource for church outreach. In the wake of various outdoor services, a painting project was seen as another form of community involvement to explore during the 2010 summer.

A site was chosen on the north side of the church (Figure 7.1), and three weather-resistant boards painted pale grey were set up end-to-end, providing a total area of approximately 130 cm high x 730 cm wide (Figure 7.2). A notice was provided adjacent to the boards, giving information about the project, an invitation to join in with a contribution on any subject, and contact details in case of enquiries. There was no attempt to influence what people contributed. Wax crayons and coloured pencils were left on-site at all times, and water-based emulsion and acrylic paints were also used. However, to minimise the possibility of accidents or vandalism with paint affecting the church building or churchyard memorials, paints were only made available to responsible groups. The materials used, together with occasional spraying of the boards using weather-resistant hairspray, proved to be effective in withstanding rainy weather. The developing picture was monitored daily, and on three occasions contributions of obscene words were deemed to be inappropriate in this particular context and I painted them out. The boards were left *in situ* from 24 June 2010 to 6 September 2010 so were available during the whole of the school summer holiday period.



Left: Figure 7.1.  
Location of site on the north  
side of St John the Baptist  
Church.  
28.06.2010.

Below: Figure 7.2.  
Painting boards, bamboo  
'notice board', and boxes of  
materials left out for anyone  
to use.  
28.06.2010.



Addressing the question of how to set the process in motion, I invited the Ruyton-XI-Towns Art Group to take the first steps. This of course immediately raises unavoidable issues concerning the influence of instigators and facilitators, which together with related issues from the other project are discussed in Section 7.5.

The Art Group members, comprising amateurs who meet regularly for both indoor and outdoor sessions, discussed the project and decided to make diverse individual contributions distributed all over the available area. This was done on 24 June, some members having done trial runs on paper beforehand. During the subsequent ten weeks, the boards were visited frequently and numerous spontaneous discussions took place as part of the creative process within the context of visits by families and groups from St John the Baptist Primary School, the Church Youth Club, and the 'Messy



Church' services of 4 July and 29 August - the Messy Church rationale, as described by Moore (2006, pp. 21-34) is to cater for all ages and needs with a menu of diverse activities.

As the picture evolved, interactions began to take place. For example, the original Art Group image of the large butterfly visible in Figure 7.2 quickly attracted another contributor to add a swarm of small collage butterflies. Subsequently a house with garden, and a cross emitting light rays, were fitted in above and under the large butterfly's wings. On the wings themselves appeared (faintly) a heart, two human figures, the words love and hope, and the greeting 'hi + hello'. Another example evolved from an original Art Group contribution of a wheat-field set in a local landscape with a background of the Breidden Hills (also visible in Figure 7.2). This first attracted two large poppies, and subsequently a hot-air balloon, a paraglider, and a small aircraft (Figure 7.3).

The final picture (Figure 7.4) had several distinctive characteristics. It had no central focus, and the pictorial images were diverse, including images from popular culture, local landscape and nature. Many people chose to give names and words instead of, or in addition to, pictorial contributions. On the final picture, there were about seventy-five names including some apparent repetitions, many small, or faded or partially obscured at this stage. Contributions were made over a range of scales from the large and eye-catching to very small images which could only be appreciated on close scrutiny; distinction between levels was reinforced in many cases by variation in intensity of colour, with many of the small images being relatively faint. Some images and words understandably reflected the involvement of church groups, for example crosses; and 'the whole world in his hand'.

To investigate participants' reactions to the project, a 'non-directive' interviewing approach was used for groups, the prime concern being 'to encourage a variety of viewpoints on the topic' (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 150). For individuals willing to give their views, questions were open-ended, following Fink (2003, p. 35): 'Open-ended questions are useful if you

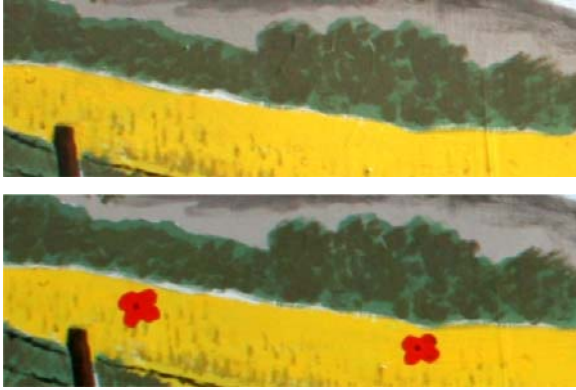


Figure 7.3.

Evolution of a local landscape scene.

From top to bottom: part of the original scene of 24.06.2010; the Youth Group added poppies on 8.07.2010; and a balloon, paraglider and small aircraft appeared by 19.07.2010.



are interested in getting unanticipated answers or in learning about the world as your respondents really see it.'

In summary, these interviews identified several processes and motivations which had been involved during the picture's production, in three main areas. With groups, there had been enjoyment of group support within the context of which individuals had made their own contributions; and an experience of fun. Group support helped some people, both children and adults, to overcome inhibitions, fear of ridicule, and feelings of limitation about their techniques being inadequate to express their ideas. Three desires were specifically identified, namely writing one's name, brightening





From top to bottom, left-hand, central and right-hand boards.

the place up, and provocation. The desire to challenge and provoke, in religious terms, the prophetic voice, was expressed particularly by the Art Group individual who contributed the paired words such as love-hate and famine-greed. With respect to interactivity, generally there had been initial reticence about impinging on others' images. There was a feeling that it was not a polite thing to do. However, once this process had started, notably by a Youth Group member painting poppies in the existing wheat-field scene, several other contributors followed suit. Overall, there was widespread appreciation of whole-community involvement, and some surprise concerning the lack of vandalism.

To this summary may be added some more information from interviews with three groups. Class 3 children from the Primary School, twenty-seven of them typically aged eight years, made their contributions on 25 June. The process was started by the class teacher who asked the children to be quiet and think for a few minutes, picturing themselves in a happy situation which they were then to draw on the board with wax crayons. I was informed that this approach was used because, faced with a blank board in the public domain, the children would have been daunted and would not have known what to do. Also, reassurance was given that their pictures would be acceptable and not be laughed at. All in the end had been happy and pleased with what they had done, and most children had written their names alongside their work, though they were not specifically asked to do so. The teacher observed that some children stick to what they know they can do. The Class 3 children confirmed that the experience had been enjoyable, however several said they had been concerned that older children or adults might think that their efforts were not very good. Some had thought of things they would like to draw but had doubts about their ability so chose another subject, for example one child thought of cricket but drew a football, corroborating the teacher's comment above. Many children described what they had drawn (for example dogs and cats), and brought up other ideas for pictures and the possibility of returning to the boards, perhaps with their families. One child made the memorable observation that others might draw things next to his and it would build up into a sort of 'kingdom.' Another

asked me how many pictures it was possible to put on the boards - an understandable question at this stage in the evolution of the picture, when each image was occupying its own space, with contributors hardly impinging on others' efforts. But theoretically, with the possibilities of layering and adding details on top of existing pictures, it must be a very large number indeed!

The Youth Group, comprising eleven teenagers some of whom had previously participated in a Messy Church service, visited the picture on 8 July. Members said they had felt confident, as a group, about adding their own contributions, and some confirmed that they had felt no inhibitions about encroaching on existing artwork. The involvement of the whole community was appreciated. There was a suggestion that there could be 'one road joining things up' in the picture.

The Art Group thought the experience had been fun, however a member expressed disappointment at the prevalence of words and names rather than visual images, and ensuing discussion touched on possible reasons for this. Perhaps people in general were frightened of trying to express themselves visually, suffered from 'blank canvas syndrome', or were daunted by the initial competent contributions by the Art Group. Another, with reference to his experience with cartoon characters, suggested that lack of technical ability in 'blowing up' small images might inhibit people from producing larger scale images - it was easy to draw small matchstick people but difficult to transform these into larger figures. I introduced the observation that I had spoken to some individual adults in the churchyard who said they would not contribute because they didn't know what to do - this evoked the suggestion that it might have been better to specify a definite subject at the outset, for example, 'the monster of Ruyton.' I asked the Art Group why (in contrast to the general tendency) none of them had written their names by their contributions. The feeling was that names were not important because members had things to say visually. It was noted that the wheat-field landscape had attracted visual additions, which led to speculation about what might have happened if the group had worked

together to produce one huge background landscape at the outset. There was comment on the lack of political ‘edge’ (for example in contrast to street art in Northern Ireland), and a possible explanation that there was ‘no pressure’ in the Ruyton-XI-Towns community, which indeed could be seen as ‘naïve.’ I suggest that another explanation might be simply that many contributors were children, but also note that on the central board there appeared an upside-down version of the peace symbol, the logo for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). It is not known if the contributor wanted to promote peace but made a mistake, or whether the symbol was being used as a genuinely pro-war or related statement in response to the adjacent word ‘peace.’

The naming of this community picture as street art was retrospective, for at the outset we did not know what would happen. However, the overall appearance at the conclusion of the project is reminiscent of examples of street art such as the New York wall depicted by Shove (2008, p. 9) where ‘many folks over much times painted and stuck and such, all manner of things and pictures and words.’ Further, with reference to the discussion in Lewisohn (2009, pp. 15-23), the picture can be seen as encompassing the two interrelated genres of street art and graffiti writing, the former focusing on visual images and the latter on words. Images occurring in the picture and also commonly found in street art include cartoon characters, rainbows, hands, hearts (cf Shove 2008, pp. 7, 25, 26, 134), flowers (cf Shove 2008, pp. 9, 40, 75, 149), and variants of the ‘human evolution’ series (Figure 7.5). One of the smaller and fainter images, a face peeping over a wall (Figure 7.5), had its origins during the Second World War. Wherever the Allies went,



Figure 7.5.

Details.

Left:  
*Human evolution.*

Right:  
*Kilroy was here.*

the words 'Kilroy was here' appeared, a precursor to graffiti, and they were typically accompanied by such faces (Young 2016, pp. 24-25; Danysz 2016, p. 12). With respect to the names and other words on the community picture, the appearance of these is relatively simple compared with 'tagging' - the production in graffiti art of highly stylised, often abstract, signatures of the writers' nicknames or pseudonyms (Gottlieb 2008, p. 6). However, in *The Faith of Graffiti* by the American writer Norman Mailer (1923-2007), originally published in 1974 at an early stage in the evolution of graffiti writing, numerous photographs taken by Jon Naar in New York show 'the old utilitarian lettering' (Mailer 2009, p. 8), more akin to the community picture.

### **7.3 The focus group with artist approach**

This, a large and complex project in that it involved six groups over a three-year period, was carried out at St John the Baptist Primary School, Ruyton-XI-Towns, between February 2010 and July 2013. During this period the school had about 140 children with an age range of four to eleven years, organised in classes from 1 (the youngest) to 5 (the eldest), and the five classes formed five focus groups. The sixth group was the staff, enrolled as such at the request of the children after completion of their own projects. The first part of this section provides background information together with the methodological basis and examination of my own role; in the second part the unfolding of the project is described and analysed in some detail.

My personal link with the school was membership of the governing body for many years, and the project was a response to the Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools (SIAS) report of July 2009, requiring that more Christian symbols be displayed in the classrooms. My proposal, accepted by the school as a partial response to this requirement, was to work with the children and enter their world as far as possible, by producing original works of art based on their ideas. It was hoped that it would then be possible to identify features of symbolic significance for the children, and hence make



connections with Christian symbolism from the children's perspective rather than imposing 'top down' symbolism.

From an academic point of view, the resulting project may be located where a number of related interests meet, all characterised by recognition of interactions between researcher and subjects. Here is a brief exploration, providing a framework of reference for reflecting on my own dual roles of researcher and artist, and serving as an introduction to the detailed project description which follows. The literature is substantial and somewhat diffuse, but three main and often overlapping strands may be distinguished. The first is qualitative arts-based research, defined as 'the systematic use of the artistic process [...] as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people they involve in their studies' (McNiff 2008, p. 29). Specifically, Sullivan (2008, pp. 240-248) describes painting as a research practice embodying the four aspects of theory, form, idea and action; these aspects will be returned to later.

The second strand is participatory action research, characterised by Kemmis and McTaggart (2008, p. 296) as a process of mutual inquiry, 'aimed at reaching [...] unforced consensus about what to do, and a sense that what people achieve together will be legitimate' for others as well as themselves. Resonating with the rationale of the third spiral in *The Three Spirals* model, Kemmis and McTaggart (2008, pp. 276-278) comment that this type of research involves 'a spiral of self-reflective cycles' involving planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and re-planning. Cameron *et al* (2010, p. 36) apply the approach specifically to theological action research (TAR); and whilst warning against over-simplified definitions, suggest that this can be seen in terms of partnership, process, conversation, and a way of knowing.

Commitment to conversation is based on:

... a theology of revelation and truth that not only recognizes the variety of authentic theological voices (including those that do not use words), but also recognizes that there are particular skills and wisdom involved in allowing these different and distinct voices to be heard together, and in conversation with one another. An appropriate method has to be worked out, which not only allows a proper place to the variety of theological voices, but also



enables a genuine openness to hearing those voices, even when they might seem strange or contradictory.  
(Cameron *et al* 2010, p. 57).

With respect to the school project, a cyclical process in which the children conversed with each other and with me was envisaged from the outset; it was also recognised that some voices 'do not use words', this indeed being a reason for using visual images. However, alongside the group processes there was development of my own understanding, pointing to the third strand, namely autoethnography. Among other things, autoethnography as a research method involves the researcher's personal experience, uses self-reflection or 'reflexivity' to examine relationships between self and others, and attempts to balance intellectual, emotional and creative aspects of the research:

Reflexivity consists of turning back on our experiences, identities and relationships in order to consider how they influence our present work. Reflexivity also asks us to explicitly acknowledge our research in relation to power... (Adams *et al* 2015, p. 29).

Three autoethnographic axes have been distinguished (Ellis and Bochner 2000, p. 740; Ngunjiri *et al* 2010) - the self (*auto*), culture (*ethno*) and the research process itself (*graphy*). Each axis can be seen as a continuum, along which individual projects fall at different locations. For example, among the various approaches identified by Ellis *et al* (2011), those of personal narrative and narrative ethnography are at the *auto* and *ethno* extremes, focusing respectively on researchers' own stories and on the study of others. Critiques of autoethnography need to be borne in mind, for example that it may be self-indulgent, removed from context and lack methodological rigour (Sparkes 2002 pp. 212-215; Wall 2014). Such critiques seem to be particularly applicable to the *auto* extreme; however there are counter-arguments, for example the voice of the insider is more authentic than the voice of outsiders (Wall 2014). Perhaps the most fundamental counter-argument comes from ideas already expressed in Sections 1.4 and 1.5, namely that individuals necessarily live in and are influenced by a wider cultural milieu and hence, as Sparkes (2002, p. 217)

puts it, any particular story 'involves and depends upon a story of the Other too.'

Using the reflexive approach, I concluded that all three axes could be distinguished, and that the project was not located at any extreme positions along these. My initial considerations were focused on the research *process*, with particular attention being paid to ways of minimising any influence I might have on what the children contributed. These included the incorporation of methodological suggestions from the staff, school leadership team, and the York St John University Ethics Committee (Reference UC/14/7/JB). Ethnographically expressed, I was seeking to understand the children's *culture*, in line with Weber's reasoning that visual images help us to see other people's viewpoints and 'borrow their experience', enabling comparison with our personal experience (Weber 2008, p.45). From the personal point of view (*self*), the project was a learning experience, with reflection on this experience suggesting the following about my active role in the process:

- Structuring. From the outset I saw one of my roles as structuring the children's material with the aims of accommodating and doing justice to all their ideas, and as far as possible drawing wider significance out of the diversity of contributions. Notwithstanding the provisions in the research process for curbing my own influence, I came to a greater realisation of the power inherent in this role and hence the importance of prior ethical scrutiny. For each class, a strong structure proved essential to contain all the children's diverse suggestions in one harmonious picture, and it was I who imposed these structures albeit using children's ideas as far as possible, and with the children's consent. However, there was greater personal involvement than I had initially appreciated, for the structures incorporated my own ideas and knowledge as analysed in more detail below. My knowledge included familiarity with local landscapes, trees and buildings; in some cases this went so far as strong emotional attachment influencing choices, for

example the large tree in the foreground of Class 3's *Our Wonderful World* (Figure 7.8).

- Interpreting. The same may be said of my visual interpretations of children's verbal requests whether written or oral. Reflecting on my responses, I see how they incorporate my own ideas and experience, for example my familiarity with several popular artworks showing the world held in God's hands (see especially Class 5's *All Together in One World*, Figure 7.10). Whilst all the interpretations used had the children's consent; nevertheless, as with structures, the degree of my personal involvement needs to be recognised.
- Adapting. Structures had to cope with the evolution of each painting as it progressed through the above-mentioned cyclical process, and in some cases this necessitated significant adjustments in which a child's suggestion catalysed my imagination. In particular, with respect to Class 1's *Our Safe Places* (Figure 7.6), the suggestion to include the church came only during the third turn of the spiral of class sessions. This suggestion was mainly accommodated through personal experimentation culminating in the idea of adding the large framing segment of doorway arch. This assumed considerable aesthetic importance in the picture and is an example of adaptation in response to changed external circumstances, trajectory [I] in the typology proposed in Section 2.2.
- Creating. The above observation contributes to my retrospective linking of the project with existing accounts of creativity as summarised in Section 2.2. I often experienced sessions with the classes and the subsequent act of painting as hard work (*saturation*), necessitating taking time to mull things over (*incubation*), and awaiting solutions to problems (*illumination*). Identification of these stages helped me realise the extent of my own creative contribution to the paintings; in depicting and structuring the children's suggestions, I

was doing much more than simply acting as their servant. Whilst I did not contribute ideas for actual objects, these stimulated my imagination as exemplified above. Moreover, there was interaction between the suggested objects and the structures in that the latter provided niches for the former; choosing where to situate particular items was often an area of discussion between me and the class concerned. Putting these various observations together, it is reasonable to suggest that the paintings emerge from *collaborative creativity*, thus expanding Helmholtz's and Gell-Mann's analyses of creativity as presented in Section 2.2.

More generally, returning to Sullivan's analysis of painting as research practice, his four aspects of theory, form, idea and action (Sullivan 2008, pp. 240-248) can all be retrospectively identified in the project. With respect to *theory*, the above paragraphs are consonant with Sullivan's observation that:

...the artist is not only embodied in the making of images and objects, but these artworks also exist within a wider space of critical discourse that is partly directed by the scope of the research project, and partly by the field at large. (Sullivan 2008, p. 242).

However, it should be noted that to a considerable extent I am theorising after the event, and that artists' personal interpretations may have limitations as highlighted in Section 1.1. Commenting on painting as *form*, Sullivan (2008, p. 244) refers *inter alia* to the structural qualities of paintings, and to how concerns may be explored through experimentation during which new forms emerge. This may be related to my experience of structuring as described above. He sees the *idea* aspect of painting as the exploration of conceptual issues, facilitating dialogue between artist, viewer, and 'interpretive community' (Sullivan 2008, p. 245); in the present case ideas were explored in a more complex relationship with both the children and myself participating in all three of the above roles. Finally, in painting as *act*, Sullivan (2008, pp. 247-248) emphasizes the 'doing' element, in which imaginative and intellectual enquiry is undertaken '*in and through art*

practice', in this case the collaborative practice described in more detail below.

Turning to the second part of this section, ways of proceeding were discussed at an initial staff meeting. There was agreement that the first stage should be initiated in my absence, by the children working with their class teachers and expressing their ideas about themes and subject matter through producing their own pictures and/or words. This material provided the basis for me to have a first discussion with each class through the mediation of the teacher, following which I produced first-draft paintings, one per class, with a size of 80 x 60 cm. The attention paid to each child's ideas and pictures during the first discussion, and the production of first drafts, showed the children from an early stage that the painting depended on their ideas. However, though my use of children's material was meant to be easily recognisable and to fully respect their ideas, I did not copy their images slavishly or childishly as this would not come naturally and, I felt, might even be patronising. Unveiling the first draft in the classroom was always a moment of apprehension and vulnerability - had I got it right, did the children identify with my treatment of their ideas? Subsequently, in discussion with the class and noting additional suggestions made verbally, I produced further draft paintings. Comments from class teachers on how the project was going were sought separately.

For most children, it was of foremost importance that they could see their individual suggestions, as reflected in comments such as 'there's my dog', or 'my favourite bit is my footballer.' Supply of 'before' photos with new drafts allowed 'before and after' comparisons so children could pinpoint changes resulting from their suggestions. Discussions in class included asking the children if I did not have enough information to proceed, for example what was meant by 'the life process cycle', what vegetables would the children like in a proposed vegetable garden, and where in the sky should Santa Claus be located? In some cases, there were different opinions - more about the positioning of items than whether they should be included or not; and also about the titles for the paintings. Differences were resolved

democratically by voting methods already used in the classrooms, either a show of hands, or the 'thumbs up' approach. This involves the children putting their heads down on the tables so they cannot see what others are doing, and putting their thumbs up when they hear their preferred option. A total of three stages proved to be adequate for each class. The successive drafts incorporated the additional ideas, corrections or deletions requested by the children, until all were satisfied with the picture. Thus the children were involved in a central way, and were able to see the picture change in accordance with their suggestions.

The media were mixed, primarily acrylic paints but with pen and ink work, pencil, and small insertions of paper collage contributing to the fine detail, especially during the later stages. Anticipating handling by the children, all the pictures were done on 6mm medium density fibreboard (MDF) and eventually varnished, so they were as robust as possible. The final paintings are shown in Figures 7.6 to 7.10.

As suggested in the first part of this section, whilst I did not contribute any ideas for actual material I was nevertheless in a powerful position on two counts. First, with verbal suggestions either written or oral, it was necessary to make visual interpretations for the children's scrutiny; and second, I had to introduce overall structures which had the capacity to cope with the evolution of the picture. This power went hand in hand with vulnerability, my feelings of apprehension as mentioned above indicating my emotional involvement in getting things right. Structuring included use of the following techniques, partly intuitive and partly informed by other artworks, making it possible to accommodate the diversity of subject and size within an overall appearance of coherence and without distracting clutter:



Figure 7.6. Class 1: *Our Safe Places*. 09.06.2010.





Figure 7.7. Class 2: *A Walk Along the Rainbow*. 11.06.2012.





Figure 7.8. Class 3: *Our Wonderful World*. 27.01.2012.



Figure 7.9. Class 4: *Celebrating Life and Friendship*. 29.06.11.





Figure 7.10. Class 5: *All Together in One World*. 11.02.11.

- Pictures within pictures. Typically these are images seen through the windows of houses, though in the case of Figure 7.9 different scenes are depicted in bubbles. An influence was the anonymous 17<sup>th</sup> century Flemish painting *Cognoscenti in a Room Hung with Pictures* (Anon c. 1620). Adding another layer, there are several examples of pictures within pictures within pictures, for example in pictures of rooms seen through windows, there may be further pictures on television or computer screens, or indeed pictures hanging on the walls. Class 2 requested a picture of me painting their picture, this can be seen through a window in Figure 7.7. As previously mentioned, in the case of Class 1, the church building was not requested until the third (final) session so I added it both as a 'picture within a picture' and as a framing section of the church door arch on the left side. Though it was not appropriate to discuss this with an age range of four to six years, from my point of view this was meant to be ambivalent - are we looking through the door at a scene outside the church, or is the scene symbolically inside the church?
- Perspectival devices. This approach is best exemplified in Figure 7.8, which has large houses, a tree and grassy area in the foreground (allowing details such as flowers, birds, and 'pictures within pictures'); and a rapid recession into a vast landscape in the background (allowing features such as hills, a lake and a rainbow). An influence was the online gallery of Glynn Gorick's environmental paintings (Gorick 2013). Reference has already been made, in Section 3.4, to Gorick's accommodation of different scales from the microscopic to the cosmic in some of his paintings; in this context reference was made to his landscapes and seascapes with individual plants and animals in the foreground and expansive views in the background.
- Hierarchic approach to size. In some cases, the relative sizes of objects reflect their importance to the children. For example, the sea area in Figure 7.7 includes a pirate ship, dolphins, various fish, and

mermaids, and following normal perspective, the ship should be much larger than has been shown. Rather than having a ship completely dwarfing the sea creatures, sizes have been adjusted to reflect the fact that all the suggestions were important to the children who made them. An influence was medieval art with hierarchical treatment of the size of human figures, for example as illustrated in Diebold (2000, pp. 2-5).

- Habitat differentiation. The sub-division of landscapes into different habitats allowed for the accommodation of different groups of objects, for example the garden in the foreground of Figure 7.7 provides a niche for vegetables, pets, and toys.
- Zoning. Concentric zones in Figure 7.10 accommodate different subjects and sizes, with an outer zone including the Himalayas and the Great Wall of China, intermediate zones including buildings, flora and fauna, and an inner zone with a multi-ethnic ring of people.
- Quartering. Requests from both Class 4 and Class 5 for the four seasons to be included led to four related scenes in a line (Figure 7.9) and in a circle (Figure 7.10). These made room for seasonally-dependent images such as lambs, Easter eggs, and Christmas trees. Influences were first an illustration of a deciduous tree in its four seasonal aspects, in a school library book. This was shown to me by a child with the request that I should include something like it in the class picture - it forms the basis for the linear seasonal design in Figure 7.9. Second, *Werk Gottes* (Hildegard von Bingen, 12<sup>th</sup> century) was the basis for the quartered seasonal design of the centrepiece of Figure 7.10.

As already mentioned, the first stage of the process for each class was for the children to produce their own pictures and/or words. Class 1's pictures were not annotated by the children as this was beyond their capacity, but a

teacher subsequently talked with each child and wrote a summary of what they said on the back of each picture. Analysis of the Class 1 data (Table 7.1) shows that some items, notably the sun, houses with their external features, and garden hedges or fences, were presented predominantly in visual form. In contrast, verbal reference was preferred for family members and beds. This suggests (albeit in a preliminary way) the involvement of different intelligences at work, with verbal expression being preferred for subjects which (possibly) are more difficult to draw and with which the children are most involved from the emotional point of view.

	Visual	Verbal
Sun	6	1
Houses	11	6
Chimneys	4	0
Windows	10	0
Front Doors	7	0
Beds	2	8
Garden hedges or fences	7	1
Family	7	18

Table 7.1.

Analysis of selected subject matter, Class 1, stage 1, 08.03.2010.

Note: some children both drew and spoke about the same subject, which may therefore appear in both columns. In particular, the 2 visual presentations of beds are a sub-set of the verbal, and the 7 visual presentations of family are a sub-set of the verbal.

In the case of Class 2, a few children annotated their drawings; and a good correspondence between pictures and what the children wrote on them was reached by Class 5. The one item which appeared in many pictures throughout the school but which children typically did not write down or talk about was the sun - perhaps it is taken for granted that it will be there. The variety of the children's suggestions looked at class by class reflects many sources of ideas, beginning with home (and its loved family members, pets and toys, rooms and gardens); and expanding with travel, holidays, books, television and the internet with their diverse memories, impressions and images. Analysis of subject matter (Table 7.2) quantifies the progressive

widening of the children's worlds which is evident visually in the succession of finished paintings (Figures 7.6 – 7.10). It further suggests that following the home-centred world of Class 1, there is a stage, particularly noticeable with Class 2, where imaginary subjects co-exist with 'reality' in the children's worlds. Not included in Table 7.2 but also discernible in the succession of paintings are developments concerning awareness of good and evil, and the presence of God; these are discussed at length in section 7.5.

Class	Number and gender distribution of pupils (F = female; M = male)	Age	Subject matter			
			Home	Locality	World	Imaginary
1	21 (12F, 9M)	4-6	77	36	7	1
2	26 (14F, 12M)	6-7	13	50	22	48
3	30 (13F, 17M)	8	36	52	25	5
4	32 (18F, 14M)	9	28	28	53	13
5	32 (14F, 18M)	10-11	19	64	147	4

Table 7.2.

Class data and analysis of subject matter in the five class paintings.

#### Notes

- With respect to ethnicity, the children were all White British, with the exception of one White Polish child in Class 4.
- Overall, the gender distribution was nearly equal, with 71F and 70M.
- Under subject matter, the numbers refer to the number of suggestions in a particular category. If one item such as the school building was suggested, for example, by three children, this was counted as three suggestions.
- 'Home' includes family, friends, houses and contents, gardens and contents, toys and pets. 'Locality' includes the village, the school and other local buildings, geographical features and landmarks within an approximately 10-mile radius. 'World' includes the wider world with its geographical features, landmarks, buildings, flora and fauna, people, and flags. Outer space is also included here. 'Imaginary' includes mythological and fairy-tale characters (eg unicorns, mermaids and fairy princesses), and other imaginative items such as puffles and moshi monsters.

The children's suggestions were also influenced by the time of year, events in the news, and recent activities at the school. For example, their teacher informed me that Class 4 lived 'in the now', hence suggestions such as red nose day, Easter eggs, and the royal wedding which are all depicted in

Figure 7.9. Other suggestions such as World War II themes, and Jesus and the cross, related to subjects which had recently been discussed as part of the curriculum. In some cases, similarities between pictures produced by the children reflect the fact that they worked together in groups around their classroom tables so could influence each other.

Because all were able to make suggestions freely, the painting process was a way to enter the children's worlds. As indicated in Table 7.2, these were in part populated by imaginary subjects, some familiar for example unicorns, mermaids and fairy princesses, and others not familiar to me. I heard for the first time (as did some of the teachers) about enthusiasms current at the time, namely puffles and Club Penguin (popular with Classes 2, 3 and 4) - an online game involving penguin avatars and puffle pets which can be adopted (<http://www.clubpenguin.com/>). Also popular with Class 2 were moshi monsters and moshlings - another online game in which monsters can be adopted and have moshling pets (<http://www.moshimonsters.com/> and <http://www.moshlings.com/>). It was Class 2 who made the greatest number of suggestions for such imaginary subjects and whose requests included the painting of a family (human) having a picnic next to the puffles; and the changing of the colour of the purple buddleia flowers next to Oddie (a moshling) because Oddie doesn't like purple. I subsequently painted the flowers white. Questions arise, to be addressed in Section 7.4, about the phenomenal status of such imaginary beings.

Following discussion of the five class paintings at a whole-school assembly, the children asked that the staff also be involved in producing a picture. There was staff agreement that the painting should, as it were, come back from the realms of outer space shown in the older children's pictures, and focus on the school and its ethos. A two week period was agreed during which all staff could give in their ideas, represented pictorially, verbally or both, at the school office. Pictures produced included the school building, the church building, the sun and rainbows, which are features common to all the children's pictures but which had not generally been consciously copied. Some pictures symbolised school activities such as sports, music and art.



There were children holding hands, reminiscent of people holding hands in the Class 4 and Class 5 paintings. Trees also featured, in particular an oak tree, oak leaves and acorns, bringing to mind the school symbol of paired oak leaves surmounted by paired acorns. A striking difference between the staff and children's contributions was that the staff wrote many more words, representing ideas and feelings rather than things. Typically and understandably many of these related to the world of education, for example: achieve, determination, empathy, enjoy, independence, listening, resilience, sharing, talents, valuing, wow factor. For reasons of both practicality and effectiveness, these words were incorporated into the painting typographically.

As with the children's pictures, there was discussion of draft paintings, with three stages proving to be adequate. The final painting is shown in Figure 7.11. The line of children breaking off the main circle and extending up the road to the church was suggested as a symbol of school-church connections, and the two snatches of music are from the hymns *One More Step Along the World I Go* (Carter 1971), parallel with the line of children approaching the church, and *Who Put the Colours in the Rainbow* (Booth 1980), issuing from the church building. These choices were mine, but their inclusion stems from a request previously made by the staff concerning the SIAS report and Christian symbols. They felt it would be helpful where possible in the picture series to evoke symbolism allowing connection with hymns sung by the children in assembly. In fact this can be done with any of the pictures; possibilities discussed include *Lord the Light of Your Love is Shining* (Kendrick 1987), *Colours of Day Dawn into the Mind* (McClellan *et al* 1974), and *For the Beauty of the Earth* (Pierpoint 1864).

The central oak tree is based on a large old tree near the school, and a detail given in Figure 7.12 shows how the bark is a collage made up of the staff's words. They were printed in Century Schoolbook (!) font and in different colours and sizes, on paper which had been pre-printed with bark images photographed from the actual tree. The words were then cut out and



Figure 7.11. Staff: *The Tree of Wisdom, Life and Learning*. 11.07.2013.





Figure 7.12. Detail from *The Tree of Wisdom, Life and Learning*. 11.07.2013.

glued to produce a bark effect, with paint being used for final touches. There are a number of artistic precedents for including words in paintings, for example the American painters Cy Twombly (1928-2011) and Ed Ruscha (1937-) both used words as new kinds of objects which ‘cannot be characterised in terms of exclusive alternatives’ (Berggruen 2011, p. 99 ). In Ruscha’s own words, ‘it seems difficult to untangle the relationship between art and language’, and ‘I like the idea of a word becoming a picture, almost leaving its body, then coming back and becoming a word again’ (Ruscha 2003, 1998, cited by Berggruen 2011, pp. 99, 108). Berggruen comments about Ruscha’s pictures that ‘they involve perceptual issues, as the works function equally well as a visual thing (an “image” or an “icon”), but also as a verbal thing or a statement’ (Berggruen 2011, p. 108). The detail of the oak bark in Figure 7.12 functions in this way.

#### **7.4 Phenomenological analysis**

What sort of phenomenology is appropriate for the pictures which emerged from these projects? In previous chapters, the art discussed has been produced in response to diverse phenomena, but whilst numerous examples are given of the artists being subject to influences such as other artists or aesthetic theories, there can be no doubt that each picture is the work of an individual. Kac (2004, pp. 199-200) calls this ‘monological art [...] largely based on the concept of individual expression’, and it is in this sense that Marion discusses artists in his writings. In contrast, the images described here result from the activities of many people, arising from a variety of dialogues and roles, and could not have been produced monologically.

General characteristics of the two approaches may be summarised as follows. First, street art on a large public board is open to all, and does not require that the facilitator be an artist. Participants include individuals and various groups, with numerous possibilities for spontaneous dialogue and also visual dialogue in which contributors respond to existing images with their own images. Second, the focus group with artist approach works with

defined groups and an artist-mediator, with the painting wholly dependent on the group's ideas and approval but produced solely by the artist. Advantages are that the artist can express some things which group members would like to see but find difficult to paint themselves; and the necessity for several sessions provides maximum opportunities for in-depth discussion and experience of reaching consensus. The group sees how diverse individual ideas can be woven into a coherent picture. I have previously assessed these approaches in relation to a wider spectrum of communal art projects including some described in the literature, in the context of 'mediating peace: reconciliation through visual art' (Baker 2015, pp. 172-191).

With both projects there were positive comments about the support and enjoyment which had been experienced with group working. In the case of the street art, this is reminiscent of the conclusions of Halsey and Young (2006, p. 279), based on detailed interviews with 'real' graffiti writers in Australia: 'Interviewees overwhelmingly indicated that their original involvement in graffiti derived from a combination of its aesthetic appeal for them and a sense that it was a gregarious activity through which they might make friends with others.' Longer term involvement with the activity went hand in hand with 'powerful emotional and physical sensations' including pride, pleasure and 'the enjoyment derived from sharing of an activity with friends.' Halsey and Young also comment that the illicit nature of graffiti writing 'probably overlays the actual activity with a further charge' though they go on to say that many so-called 'hard core' illicit writers derive 'as much if not more satisfaction from completing a legal canvas' (Halsey and Young 2006, pp. 282, 292). Similarly, Lewisohn (2009, p. 45) refers to the 'adrenalin rush of illegality' as an attraction. In retrospect, it can be seen that setting up the boards in the churchyard was in effect establishing a 'legal wall' without such an attraction, though there is still the possibility of an 'adrenalin rush of creativity' and related feelings associated with overcoming inhibitions.

Both projects necessarily required some sort of facilitation, and whilst none of this compelled would-be contributors to produce particular images, or

indeed to produce anything at all, possible influences need to be identified. The Art Group painters decided to start the street art with eight individual pictures, albeit working together aware what each was doing. It is clear that their choices in part influenced what others subsequently drew or painted, as exemplified in Figure 7.3; and it seems likely that if, as retrospectively discussed, they had painted one huge background landscape at the outset, the development of the whole picture would have taken a different course. With respect to the focus group with artist approach, I sought to express the multi-faceted desires of the primary school groups through engaging in prolonged interaction both verbal and visual. Ostensibly I was the artist, but without such dialogue I could not have produced paintings like Figures 7.6 to 7.10 in a million years. However, I contributed the necessary pictorial structures as described in the preceding section, these being my responses to what arose in group sessions. It may be concluded that one way or another, some sort of facilitation was necessary for any of the pictures to happen at all; however the importance of handling this responsibly and consensually was recognised in discussions about details of procedure with the York St John University Ethics Committee, before approval was given. The question of whether my priestly role in the parish had any effect on outcomes is considered in Section 7.5.

The ambivalence of my primary school role is echoed by Marion's ambivalence concerning what painters do. On the one hand, the 'truly creative painter [...] is characterized not by a plastic inventiveness imposing his will but rather by a passive receptivity, which, from among a million possible lines, knows to choose this one that imposes itself from its own necessity' (Marion 2004, p. 36). On the other hand, the painter is described as having a 'Promethean privilege never to reproduce the world. He or she adds something visible so far unseen to the total of visible things in the world' (Marion 2011, p. 164).

In other words, as a painter in Marion's 'passive receptivity' mode, I was faced with the phenomena of all the children's suggestions and experienced this part of the process as saturated. Nevertheless, in Marion's 'Promethean

privilege' mode, I used the material to create new worlds, whilst taking as much care as possible not to abuse this privilege and to remain faithful to what the children wanted.

Two possible phenomenological points of contact have been touched on in previous chapters. They are Bakhtin's dialogism as mentioned in Section 4.5 and Buber's *I-Thou* relationship as introduced in Section 6.6. Here it was the work of individual artists being analysed, but Bakhtin and Buber both in effect engage in what the American philosopher Beata Stawarska calls dialogical phenomenology. Her basic contention is that traditional phenomenology has been overly attached to egocentricity, whereas 'from the dialogical point of view, the phenomenological method is not exhausted by the intentional relation of a collective of *I*-subjects to the objective *it*-world, but is enmeshed with the engagement to a *you*' (Stawarska 2009, p. 177, Stawarska's italics). This language is of course reminiscent of Buber, who she discusses at length, emphasising 'the crucial point regarding Buber's principle of I-you connectedness: it is not an additive unity composed of isolated individuals or substances but a relational process' (Stawarska 2009, p. 150). Further, 'though communal life may seem at first sight to exceed the interpersonal dynamics of direct first-to-second person relations, it turns upon, on inquiry, to extend and presuppose them' (Stawarska 2009, p. 73).

Though Stawarska does not discuss Bakhtin, his dialogism is related to these arguments and augments them. In particular, springing from his work in literary criticism and referring to the novels of Dostoevsky, he said:

What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a *plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world*, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event. (Bakhtin 1984, p. 6; Bakhtin's italics).

Further, any complex cultural discourse is seen as necessarily encompassing *heteroglossia*, a 'multiplicity of social voices' with their interrelationships (Bakhtin 1981, p. 263). Notwithstanding their literary origins, these ideas can be seen as relevant for the visual arts, as discussed

for example by Haynes (1995) and Kac (2004, pp. 199-216); and in the context of this chapter, the above quotation referring to plurality of consciousnesses fits very well. There is also an implication that all the past experiences which have a bearing on participants' contributions are somehow part of these dialogical relationships, for it is Bakhtin's view that dialogue includes both past and future, as exemplified by the chronotopes in Chapter 4. In the present context I became aware of this on several occasions, the first being when discussing Class 1's picture at the primary school. Part of one child's past, family visits to the Breidden Hills which had clearly made an impression on him, is embedded in the class picture shown in Figure 7.6 - the hills are on the horizon to the right. Another example is to be found in the street art, the top section in Figure 7.4. There an adult contribution of two small bees and the name 'St Bees' evokes all the richness of living in that Cumbrian village as a child. As for the dialogue including the future, the subject was raised by staff at the primary school, who wanted children who had not been involved with the paintings to nevertheless have some help in dialoging with them. A list of open-ended questions was produced, to be used at the class teachers' discretion.

Whilst Marion's analyses do not include communal art, some links may nevertheless be made between the results described here and other pictures which he identifies as saturated phenomena. First, there is the urge to go and see them again. In other words, there is an excess of intuition, 'there is too much to see in the picture for any concepts to be able to organize the corresponding intuition. And that is why the picture requires being seen again' (Marion 2011, pp. 162-163). Certainly the various communal pictures described here were seen again and again by many people. As previously intimated, one motivation with children, not what Marion had in mind, was to pick out their own contribution and show it to others; however with the primary school paintings some adults liked viewing them repeatedly, saying that each time they looked at them they saw something new. Second, Marion also says that a picture as saturated phenomenon is distinctive in that 'it forbids intentionality, which implies that the picture is not foreseen, not even by the painter. The picture unfurls according to its own logic, imposes



itself on the painter, who does not always paint what he or she wants' (Marion 2011, p. 163). Evidence in preceding chapters shows how this may be true for individual artists, and it is a description *par excellence* of my own primary school experience. Here, starting with no idea about what might happen, making myself as open as possible to receiving and painting all the children's suggestions, I entered unfamiliar worlds and came to feel overwhelmed, satiated, indeed sometimes tired, by all that was given for each picture. Third, considering Marion's differentiation of different types of saturated phenomena as considered in Chapter 2, he analyses paintings in terms of the 'idol' type. The various pictures described here may additionally be understood as Marion's 'event' type, which *does* embrace 'collective phenomena' (Marion 2002b, p. 36). The idol type operates concurrently when the pictures reflect back to viewers their own interests.

Recognising that these pictures emerge from multiple contributions is only a first step towards understanding where they come from, for as intimated above with examples of hills and bees, the component images have histories. Moreover, feeding in to these histories are various factors including age, the influence of other artworks, and the operation of the imagination. The relevance of age is apparent from Table 7.2, which though it derives from the primary school is more widely applicable because both projects had all-age involvement. It demonstrates the age-dependence of the children's images, which widen from home-centred to a world outlook with increasing personal experience. Such progression brings to mind Appleton's theories as discussed in Chapter 1, with his proposals of three aspects of landscape towards which our responses are at least partly genetically pre-disposed: refuge, hazard, and prospect or opportunity (Appleton 1996, pp. 73-107). Table 7.2 can be interpreted as demonstrating the understandable attractiveness of familiar safe places, Appleton's refuges, for younger children and of wider horizons, Appleton's prospects, for older children. Beyond Appleton the progression culminates in adult abstract thought represented by the provocative paired words of Figure 7.4 and the oak-bark words of Figure 7.12.

Another age-related aspect is the writing of names on the street art boards; this was done predominantly by primary school children and teenagers. The psychological, developmental and symbolic significance of writing one's name is a very large subject, but in this context two connections may be made. In the case of younger children, ability to write their own names is a milestone in early education, as they learn that this is part of their uniqueness and explore the question, 'Who am I?' using both writing and drawing (Campbell 2004, p. 61). With teenagers and young adults, writing one's name was at the heart of the early graffiti-writing movement (Danysz 2016, pp. 14-19), with 'name' in this context meaning 'tags' as mentioned in Section 7.2. A number of interviews with 1970's New York graffiti writers have been published, helping to account for their motivation, and probably having some applicability to the popularity of name-writing on the Ruyton-XI-Towns street art. Some connection may be seen between young children as mentioned above and, for example, Wicked Gary:

A lot of people found [...] security and comfort in dealing with their name. It was strengthening who they were to themselves [...] Writing your name identifies who you are. The more you write your name, the more you begin to think about and the more you begin to be about who you are. Once you start doing that, you start to assert your individualism and when you do that, you have an identity. (Wicked Gary, cited by Castleman 1982, p. 76).

The influence of other artworks was mentioned above as another possible factor to consider. Previous chapters have shown how painting processes for individuals can include such influences; the same applies to communal art, though the evidence from these projects shows that the 'other artworks' in this context are likely to include diverse images from popular culture including advertising. Further, of possible relevance to the street art, Mailer (2009, p. 18) speculated that the early New York graffiti writers were 'unwittingly enriched by all art which offers the eye a family resemblance to graffiti' and which passes through the 'psychic sea' in which humans live. He went on to name a number of artists as possible influences through the 'psychic sea', including the abstract expressionist Jackson Pollock, whose methods have already been discussed in Section 2.3. Writing about abstract expressionism, Temkin (2010, p. 18) observed that most of the artists in this

movement 'distribute the emphasis equally, bidding the viewer's eye to roam over the entire pictorial field.' The Ruyton-XI-Towns street art does indeed have some visual resemblances to abstract expressionist art in that it has no central focus, and that letters and some characters such as hearts recur on different scales. However, it is pertinent to heed Gottlieb's warning against attempts to 'pigeonhole' graffiti in terms of art movements (Gottlieb 2008, p. 50), and it needs to be considered if there is some other explanation for these apparent resonances. I suggest that they have something to do with evolutionary freedom giving rise to an organic appearance. In Section 2.3 a number of artists including Pollock are discussed in terms of the freedom they allow in their paintings for the operating of natural phenomena such as gravity and the viscosity and flow rates of paints; and in the case of the street art its development relatedly comes from the freedom of allowing numerous personal and group trajectories to take their course.

The final factor addressed here is imagination. The importance of this first struck me when working with Class 2 to produce *A Walk Along the Rainbow* (Figure 7.7), a title which refers to two mice which are in fact walking along the rainbow. However, all the communal pictures involve imagination and different types can be distinguished. From a philosophical point of view, Kant, in *Critique of Pure Reason*, distinguished between reproductive imagination 'whose synthesis is subject solely to empirical laws' and productive imagination which is the 'transcendental function of the imagination' (Kant 1999, pp. 240, 257. First published 1781). Returning to the productive imagination in *Critique of Judgement*, he describes it as 'a powerful agent for creating, as it were, a second nature out of the material supplied to it by actual nature' (Kant 2008, p. 143, first published 1790).

Vygotsky related imagination to reality in ways which are consistent with, and add to, Kant's analysis, and which may be summarised as follows. First, everything created by the imagination is based on 'elements taken from reality, from a person's previous experience.' Second, products of the imagination may consist of 'transformed and reworked elements of reality' made possible through the experiences of others. Third, imagination may be

affected by emotions, which have the capacity ‘to select impressions, thoughts, and images that resonate with the mood that possesses us at a particular moment in time.’ Fourth, an imaginative construct may not correspond to any real object, but once it ‘has been given material form, this crystallized imagination that has become an object begins to actually exist in the real world, to affect other things.’ (Vygotsky 2004, pp. 13, 16-17, 17-18, and 20 respectively. First published 1967). The articulation of this fourth characteristic pre-dates Popper but is resonant with Popper’s World 3, the ‘culture’ spiral as described in Chapter 1.

In the above terms, three types of contribution to the communal pictures may be distinguished. Many are given through reproductive imagination of phenomena from Popper’s World 1, the first spiral, for example dogs, birds, trees, hills, rivers, seas, the sun and rainbows. Memories are recalled and re-envisioned as the contributions are made. Some are given through reproductive imagination of phenomena which already inhabit World 3, the second spiral; in other words, though they are products of the human mind, their creation does not lie with the people who contributed them to the pictures; rather memories have been recalled from sources such as books, television, and the internet. The productive imagination, contributing newly re-worked ‘elements taken from reality’ including pre-existing images from World 3, can be distinguished in some cases. Among these I would include the ‘sea-saw’ (an adult contribution in Figure 7.4), the above-mentioned mice walking along the rainbow, and the example described below.

As Table 7.2 demonstrates, ‘imaginary’ elements were particularly important for Class 2, and whilst most of these involved pre-existing phenomena from World 3, the children’s productive imaginations sometimes combined them with World 1 elements. For example, the class picture (Figure 7.7) contains a helicopter carrying puffles which has landed next to a human family having a picnic near the sea. The view includes a sandy beach between red sandstone cliffs, and on the beach are a multi-coloured unicorn and three mermaids. In discussion, Class 2 pupils combined ‘reality’ and ‘imagination’

quite naturally; and as described later in Section 7.5, this included what they said about fears and threats.

It would be easy to interpret these observations as confirming the still-influential views of Piaget. His writings about children's symbolic or 'pretend' games suggest that there is a stage in children's development rooted in egocentricity, reflecting an 'immature blurring of the line between reality and imagination' (Weisberg 2013, p. 75), and with an implication that childish imagination is meant to be gradually replaced by realistic adult thought:

Can (the child) be said to be pre-exercising his "imagination," imagination being viewed as a faculty to be developed like intelligence itself? Hardly, since the subsequent evolution of symbolic imagination will consist in its decrease in favour of representational tools more adapted to the real world. Moreover, the striking feature of these symbolic combinations is the extent to which the child reproduces or continues the real world, the imaginative symbol being only a means of expression to increase his range, not an end in itself. In reality, the child has no imagination, and what we ascribe to him as such is no more than a lack of coherence. (Piaget 1962, pp. 130-131).

In the first place, just as practical intelligence seeks success before truth, egocentric thought, to the extent that it is assimilation to the self, leads to satisfaction and not to objectivity. The extreme form of this assimilation to personal desires and interests is symbolic or imaginative play in which reality is transformed by the needs of the self to the point where the meanings of thought may remain strictly individual and incommunicable.

Piaget (1971, pp. 408-409).

However, during Piaget's lifetime, Vygotsky's work presented a major challenge, and with respect to children he concluded that with their comparative poverty of experience, they can in fact imagine much less than adults. The apparent richness of their imaginations results from the greater faith children have in what they imagine, combined with lesser control than adults (Vygotsky 2004; 33-34). Further, a substantial amount of later research, usefully reviewed by Weisberg (2013, pp. 75-93), suggests that children are able to discriminate between reality and imagination to a greater degree, and in more complex ways, than had previously been supposed. However she also emphasises that there is still much that is unknown and suggests some future directions for research. In this connection, the primary school project points to a methodology of possible interest, though as used

here it did not contribute specifically to imagination versus reality research because it was set up with different aims.

## **7.5 Theological interpretation**

A general observation about imagination is that the above Vygotskian model in which adults have a higher imaginative capacity than children is of considerable theological importance, and will be discussed further in Chapter 8 as it relates to the subject of revelation.

A second general observation, about subject matter in the projects, is the high frequency of church-related and ethical subjects. The appearance of church images presumably has a lot to do with the fact that the projects were seen to be organised by the church, though it is difficult to identify the specific influence of my own role as both instigator and as a priest known in both the parish and the school. However I suggest that the most important factor is the local embeddedness of the rural parish church model as mentioned in Section 7.1, the evidence for this being the support given to a variety of 'church' events irrespective of which individuals organise them. It may be predicted that images resulting from repeating these projects in an ethnically diverse inner city area would be significantly different, with fewer church-related subjects. However, wider issues of peace, justice, harmony, and care could still be expressed in a variety of ways.

A third general observation is the widespread appreciation of group working and support. The theological relevance of interpersonal relationships has already been introduced in Chapter 6 with reference to painters and their subjects, with one of the many (not mutually exclusive) interpretations of the *imago Dei* including both the *I-Thou* relationship between human beings and God, *and* between humans (Middleton 2005, p. 23). Communal working adds another layer to one-to-one human relationships, with different opportunities for co-operation and reciprocity.

How does the urge for individuation reflected in name-writing, in the Ruyton-XI-Towns street art and also with the New York graffiti writers, fit with this model? It is surely significant that name-writing was typically done in group situations in both these cases, notwithstanding the many differences between the two situations. The apparent discrepancy can be accommodated within a theological understanding of the process of human development being inherently relational. Applying the Christian metaphors of John 15: 4-5 and 1 Corinthians 12: 12-26, the name-writers are individuating as unique fruiting branches, part of the whole vine, or unique members, part of the whole body.

As the longest and most complex project, the focus group with artist approach at the primary school sparked several trains of thought. The capacity of painting processes to generate trains of thought has previously been touched on in Section 1.3 with respect to the painting of *The Three Spirals*, and is consonant with the possibility of these processes being revelatory. In this case, consideration of the five children's paintings (Figures 7.6 to 7.10), together with the associated classroom discussions, suggested three main areas concerning the development of the children's theological ideas and also allowed identification of features of symbolic significance - the original aim of the project. Most generally, the children's appreciation of the creation was evident, moving outward from suggestions such as cherry blossom trees, pet animals, and local hills in Class 1's painting to the world's wild animals, the Himalayas, and outer space with Class 5.

More specifically, Classes 3, 4, and 5 all wanted the presence of God represented pictorially - as a 'misty face' with Class 3, and as hands with Classes 4 and 5. Perhaps this represents a movement from the idea of God watching over to God holding. In either case it is a challenge for the artist, because from a theological view-point one cannot depict the invisible God and should not even try. Following my conclusions expressed in Section 2.2, about painting God's hands only being interpretable incarnationally as painting Christ's hands, I understood these aspects of the paintings as depictions of the cosmic Christ. The subject led to some interesting

classroom discussions, with the children seeming to realise quite well that nobody knows what God looks like, but nevertheless wanting God's presence recognised in the paintings. As it so happened, the 'misty face' in the sky of Figure 7.8 suddenly returned my gaze when I was painting it, so in Marion's terms it became an icon type of saturated phenomenon. Figure 7.9 has partly visible hands painted with faint gold stipple at the top and bottom of the picture, and Figure 7.10 has faintly painted hands on each side of the world.

Experimenting with this picture at the second stage of its production, Class 5 decided that it should be viewable any way up, and a minority of children said that the world did not look safe in the orientation shown in Figure 7.13, left side. With subsequent reflection, I agreed, because in the 'unsafe' painting the earth's atmosphere appeared to be escaping from God's hands. The final version was both theologically and aesthetically more satisfying, and the whole class seemed happy with the idea that I had added a 'force field' to the hands so that the earth would be safe.



Figure 7.13.

'Upside down'  
views of  
*All Together in  
One World*.

Left: second stage,  
14.01.2011.

Right: final  
painting,  
11.02.2011, with  
added 'force field'  
in bottom corners.

This consideration of God's relationship with the world returns us to the discussion of *imago Trinitatis* begun in Section 6.7. A comprehensive



consideration of recent trinitarian theology would indeed be a large undertaking and that is not the intention here, rather the analysis continues with reference to three specific subjects included in the paintings - the above-mentioned representations of God, and images of the church building and of holding hands. In summary, the requests were as follows, with all groups asking for the church building.

- Class 1. Holding hands in nurturing family relationships in home environments.
- Class 2. There were no requests for images of hands or God.
- Class 3. God as 'a misty face in the sky', also scenes from Jesus' life, death and resurrection.
- Class 4. Long lines of people holding hands, circling the earth, the sun and a rainbow. The people are not differentiated as individuals. A long line of 'star people' holding hands in the wider universe. An Allied soldier and a German soldier shaking hands. God's hands holding the universe. A Christian cross.
- Class 5. A long line of people holding hands, circling the painting's centrepiece. The people are differentiated ethnically, religiously, and with different ages represented. God's hands holding the universe, with some sense as suggested above with reference to Figure 7.13 that this involves a real physical sustaining of our world.
- Staff. A long line of pupils holding hands, circling the school building and continuing up the road to the church. Within the constraints of scale, the pupils are differentiated as individuals.

From this information a number of observations may be made which are consistent with the idea introduced in Section 6.7, that phenomenological

anthropology and trinitarian theology may inform each other in a hermeneutical spiral; however, explicit connections of this nature were not discussed with the children or staff. First, emerging from the painting process there is appreciation of a two-way relationship with God. God is relating to us by holding the earth and the wider universe in his hands, reminiscent of some biblical texts including Job 12.10: 'In his hand is the life of every living thing', and Psalm 95: 'In his hand are the depths of the earth; we are [...] the sheep of his hand.' God is also watching over us, with the concept of watching including keeping, protecting and guarding, for example as emphasised in Psalm 121. Two-way relationships between us and God are implicit in the church building, a focus for prayer and worship.

Second, the various representations of people holding hands express or symbolise human relationships including nurture, being together, diversity in unity, and reconciliation. Such relationships involve mutual giving and receiving, interdependence, and mediation of identity and difference, characteristic of the dynamic state of being called *communio*. The many participate in one reality, and this human *communio* may be interpreted as resonating with God's *communio* of trinitarian relationality (Greshake 2012, pp. 334-335), a connection which has been made in different language by the American theologian David Cunningham. Like LaCugna he has emphasised the importance of giving sense to the doctrine of the Trinity through Christian practice, including peacemaking 'when the potential plurality represented by the other is allowed to flourish', and pluralising, making room 'for multiple modes of discourse and multiple forms of practice' (Cunningham 1998, p. 235). However, he goes further than Lacugna in connecting the economic and the immanent Trinity, the human and the divine, for example:

God is certainly active in gracing human lives with virtues; but human beings are also active in allowing this grace to be formative in their lives. These two activities, divine and human, are not separate and sequential; that is, one of them does not need to be completed in order for the other to take place. Instead they are relational, and are thus inseparable. (Cunningham 1998, pp. 124-125).

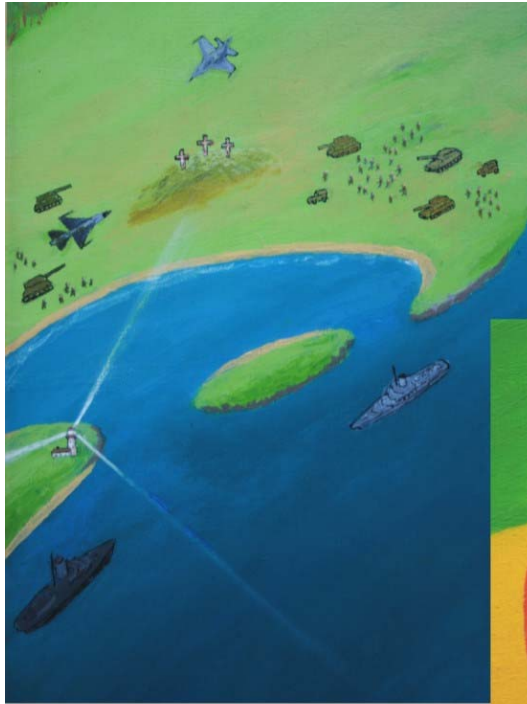
This relationship is consistent with Maspero and Woźniak's hermeneutical spiralling mentioned in Section 6.7; also the approach discussed by Williams, who sees the revelatory aspect of the hermeneutical spiral as the 'unending re-discovery of Christ or re-presentation of Christ', in trinitarian terms accomplished 'by the illuminating or transforming operation of the Spirit' (Williams 2000, p.143).

Such re-presentation of Christ was in effect requested by Class 3, in the form of scenes from Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection set in the imaginative context of *Our Wonderful World* (Figure 7.8). The painting includes Jesus on a hill talking to people, Jesus in a boat talking to people on the shore, a crucifixion scene and the empty tomb. The location of the crucifixion in the middle of a battle scene was discussed in class and reflects an understanding that somehow Jesus has something to do with fighting for what is good. The children accepted the inclusion of the various Jesus events together in one picture without any difficulty; the effect is reminiscent of multi-scene 'time-lapse' biblical depictions as mentioned in Section 4.4 with respect to icons of the parable of the Good Samaritan, and also found in some Renaissance paintings, for example *The Baptism and Temptation of Christ* (Veronese 1582). In the case of Class 4, there were six requests for the cross, and I decided to locate it in the Holy Land and paint rays of light emanating from it to depict a request for 'Jesus light of the world.' The Class 5 cross in the centre of Figure 7.10 is a diagonal one, copied from a child's artwork which was profound albeit not in specifically Christian terms because, according to the child, it represented 'joining together.'

The final main area of trains of thought may be called 'dealing with the dark side.' For the first two sessions with Class 1 children, their chosen title *Our Safe Places* was an accurate reflection of the subjects they suggested for their painting. For example, there are parents and grandparents holding children's hands, children safe in bed, and children in gardens safely enclosed within fences or hedges. However, during the third (final) session, the suggestions included ten items (for example, volcano, giant, wolf, and a 'real' bear as distinct from a teddy bear) which can be seen as distinctly

unsafe. It was agreed in class discussion that it would be appropriate to include these in the picture, but in a way that made them safe - at one stage removed from the main picture in the form of pictures within the picture. Conceptually, the children seemed at home with different levels of reality, for example 'real' dogs in the gardens but the picture of 'a real bear' on a living room wall seen through a window occupying a different level of reality. The class teacher suggested that this move towards less safe items indicated that the children felt 'visually safe' with the preceding drafts of the picture and felt that they could now go 'over the boundary.' The picture in itself was a 'safe secure environment' so was an aid to discussion, useful for talking about children's fears as well as positive experiences. This relates to what happens in school when the classroom itself is experienced as a safe place.

In the case of Class 2, suggestions reflecting fears and threats started appearing in session 2. They included an army base, army helicopter and tank, a police station, robbers and kidnappers, and pirates with a boat. There were also two requests for witches. When asked why we needed an army base, the children appeared to be hazy about the threats but settled on 'pirates', including 'pirates of the Caribbean.' Session 3 suggestions included police chasing 'baddies', an ambulance with paramedics taking a person out on a stretcher, and a haunted house. Class 3's concern about threats was clearer. From the outset, there were several requests for the armed forces, including details such as army people, army land-rovers, tanks, good jets and bad jets, good and bad battleships, submarines and weapons (see Figure 7.14). When we discussed why the children wanted these things, they spoke about how important the armed forces are to protect us and keep us safe. There was a recognition that the things we value can be threatened by people doing bad things, and that we have to be ready to protect the good. It seems, therefore, that at this stage the children are becoming aware of the ongoing story of the fight between good and evil, which underlies so much literature through the ages.



Class 3:  
The battle between good and evil.



Class 4: Reconciliation.



Class 5: World-wide harmony.

Class 4 also wanted the armed forces in their picture, but in a radically different way. The overall mood of the painting, *Celebrating Life and Friendship* was exuberant, with requests including a disco party, a birthday party, and great lines of people holding hands standing around the earth and the sun. This is reflected in the military details, which were probably

influenced by the fact that Class 4 had recently discussed World War II as part of the curriculum. The children requested Allied and German soldiers shaking hands, tanks blowing bubbles at each other, parachutes descending from the sky with presents for everyone, and love bombs for the scattering of love rather than shrapnel. This is Class 4's vision of a better world. Such a vision reaches its culmination in Class 5's *All Together in One World* with its ring of ethnically and religiously diverse people holding hands; and its appreciation of our international cultural heritage in the form of numerous landmarks including the great wall of China, the Easter Island statues, the Sydney Opera House, Rio de Janeiro's statue of Christ the Redeemer, the Empire State building and Stonehenge.

Features common to all the paintings are the sun, rainbows, the school building and the church building - this was recognised by the children themselves, unprompted by me, in an interactive session during a whole-school assembly with all paintings on display. The children did not themselves identify any of these subjects as symbolic, but precisely because they are obviously important to the children irrespective of age, the potential is there to draw out their symbolic significance - which was the original aim of the project. The following are possibilities. Biblically, Malachi 4:2 'the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings' refers to 'the healing warmth of the sun of justice' (Cody 1999, p. 361). Such symbolism is taken up in the New Testament, notably in the Benedictus, Luke 1: 78-79, which forms part of the Church of England liturgy for Morning Prayer (Common Worship 2000, p. 34). In particular, 'In the tender compassion of our God, the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.' Also biblical, the rainbow is a symbol of the covenant between God and all living creatures following the great flood (Genesis 9:12-17). With respect to the two other subjects requested by all classes, I suggest that the school and church buildings can also be seen as having symbolic significance, standing for shared purposes and values, a sense of community, and the wider vision of the church as the people of God.

## CHAPTER 8

### APPROACHING REVELATION

#### 8.1 Painting processes and saturated phenomena

This final chapter returns to the question of revelation, presented in Chapter 1 as problematic because of tensions between natural theology and traditional revealed religion. To this problem Marion brings his approach directed to arriving at the possibility of the phenomenon of theistic revelation by way of saturated phenomena (Marion 2002a, pp. 234-235). Marion has given several different definitions of saturated phenomena; the following has not been used in earlier chapters and serves as a re-statement of the essential characteristics:

...phenomena where the duality between intention (signification) and intuition (fulfillment) certainly remains [...] but where, to the contrary of poor and common phenomena, intuition gives (itself) in exceeding what the concept (signification, intentionality, aim, and so on) can foresee of it and show. I call these saturated phenomena, or paradoxes. They are saturated phenomena in that constitution encounters there an intuitive givenness that cannot be granted a univocal sense in return. (Marion 2002b, p. 112).

The investigation of painting processes following *The Three Spirals* framework of nature, culture and persons has provided evidence that among the diversity of painters' experiences, Marion's analyses of givenness and saturated phenomena may be recognised, however the study goes further in the following innovative ways, brought together in Section 8.2:

- Analysis of five areas which evidence from painting suggests may be experienced as saturated phenomena, not previously discussed as such by Marion.
- Identification of nesting of saturated phenomena.
- Proposal of visual-verbal chronotopes as a concept applicable to hermeneutical spirals, and their functioning as saturated phenomena.

- Recognition of painting processes as saturated phenomena in their own right.

The consideration of painting processes as saturated phenomena includes addressing important related questions which have arisen in previous chapters about what constitutes 'great' or 'authentic' art.

At the same time, fundamental questions have been raised about the reception of givenness vis-à-vis the role of the artist, and considerable evidence has accumulated for diverse influences lying between givenness and paintings; these are summarised in Section 8.3 so adding to a continuing debate in Marion studies. Section 8.4 takes another look at the paintings analysed in previous chapters, but organised according to the type of saturated phenomena exemplified, event, idol, flesh or icon as first defined in Section 2.5. This facilitates linkage with the different ways in which Marion understands revelation, and so arrives phenomenologically at the possibility of painting processes being revelatory. However, the possible revelatory role of imagination has also become apparent in some of the preceding explorations of painters' experiences, hence Section 8.5 examines these experiences with reference to 'imagination' literature. Finally, Section 8.6, *Around the hermeneutical spiral*, looks at the 'givenness through saturated phenomena' approach together with the 'imagination' approach, to see how they may be compatible or complementary in understanding revelation through painting processes.

## **8.2 'A bigger message'**

The evidence presented from painters' autobiographical material indicates that experiences of being struck, overwhelmed or quietly inspired by givenness are widespread and diverse though not necessarily expressed in these terms; and that this diversity includes five main areas which are hardly touched on by Marion, namely nature, the Bible, evil, communal or collaborative working, and 'the mystery of appearance' whilst painting is in



progress. Hence through the processes of painting, among other things, it is possible to appreciate ‘a bigger message’ about givenness. There is no intention to imply that this is the only such expansion, rather it contributes to the growing corpus which is testimony to the stimulation and fruitfulness of Marion’s work.

The subtitle *A Bigger Message* comes from a book which records conversations with David Hockney, including the following. Hockney is speaking from the Yorkshire Wolds about trees, hedgerows and grasses: ‘This is the sort of thing you notice if you are looking carefully [...]: the infinite variety of nature’ (Hockney 2006, cited by Gayford 2011, p. 32).

Earlier examples of such experiences of the abundance of nature include the words of Paul Cézanne from the Arc valley in Provence and William Heaton Cooper from the English Lake District, as discussed in Chapter 3. It is also the case that through the centuries experienced painters have pointed to nature as the great teacher, including in this context the form and functioning of the human body, recognising that nature gives inexhaustibly to those who will see. For example, Leonardo da Vinci wrote: ‘nature has brought forth all visible things and painting is born of these [...] Beneficent nature has provided that you may find something to imitate everywhere’ (da Vinci BN 2038 20v, 31v, cited by Chastel 2002, pp. 49, 53); and Claude Monet advised: ‘Paint as you see nature yourself. If you don’t see nature right with an individual feeling, you will never be a painter, and all the teaching cannot make you one’ (Monet, cited by Barnes 1990a, p. 18). Notwithstanding such evidence, Marion does not include nature in his discussions of saturated phenomena. This omission was identified by Gschwandtner (2014b, pp. 82-101), and her arguments that nature should be so interpreted are substantially confirmed and augmented by painters’ experiences discussed here. Further, these experiences include the sublime in nature and so may sometimes be uncomfortable, encompassing feelings of limitlessness, awe, insecurity or fear. Possibilities of making connections with Marion are thereby opened as discussed in Chapter 3, because from the philosophical

point of view he *does* recognise the sublime in terms of saturated phenomena (Marion 2002a, p. 220).

Comparison of Lake District landscapes by Alfred Heaton Cooper with paintings of rock details by his grandson Julian Cooper, together with examination of environmental paintings by Glynn Gorick which combine details of very small organisms with expansive landscapes or seascapes, led to the realisation that saturated phenomena may be nested. That is, they manifest at different scales from the cosmic to the microscopic or vice versa. It became apparent that nesting is not confined to the saturated phenomena of nature, and may be applied *inter alia* to the Bible (Chapter 4) and the First World War (Chapter 5). The former encompasses relationships between specific texts and the Bible as a whole; and the latter between broader historical perspectives and the givens endured by individual combatants, which for some became literally unspeakable because of the excess of suffering.

The Bible was seen as ‘a synonym for nature’ and as ‘the most extraordinary source of poetic imagination imaginable’ by Marc Chagall (Chagall 1983, cited by Marchesseau 1998, pp. 148-149). Chapter 4 focuses on just three biblical texts, the Deluge, Moses and the Burning Bush, and the Parable of the Good Samaritan; and the abundance and diversity of painted responses demonstrate that Chagall’s words are applicable to a great many artists, thus supporting Quash’s identification of the Bible as a saturated phenomenon. In contrast, Marion uses the Bible as a source of proof-texts for his arguments that Christ is the Revelation *par excellence*. As a cultural and literary phenomenon, interpretation of the Bible through the centuries is part of the cultural evolution mentioned in Chapter 1, and it is suggested that the work of Mikhail Bakhtin on the ‘chronotope’ in literature is applicable. In the case of the Bible, more so than with other literature, there is in addition to the strand of the text itself continuing through history, a vast and ever-growing dialogic hermeneutic with both verbal and visual strands interacting with each other along with the textual strand. Hence in Chapter 4 the concept of the visual-verbal chronotope is suggested, a given which participates in the

Bible's saturation and is part of the context within which biblically inspired paintings emerge. These may be simply an attempt to illustrate texts or they may illustrate exegetical writing and thought; the third possibility is visual exegesis in which the artist surpasses any interpretation which has been previously expressed (Hughes 2010, pp. 180-187).

*The Three Spirals* includes areas of darkness to represent the darker side of givenness, and one philosophical approach to analysing this is through consideration of the sublime in its fear-evoking expressions including the apocalyptic and technological sublime as discussed in Chapter 5. This chapter as a whole looks at the First World War with its terrible givens, to which there was a prolific artistic response. War has been identified by Marion as a saturated phenomenon of the event type though he does not discuss this in depth; more generally 'radical evil' was so identified by Matušík (2008, pp.127-128). However, as noted by Meyer (2015, p. 2), from the phenomenological point of view Marion does not discriminate ethically or morally between such experiences and ecstatic mystical experiences; Robinette (2007, p. 86), writing about Marion's 'challenge/gift' to theology, makes a similar point when he argues for a 'balancing emphasis [...] the ethical-prophetic dimension of the Christ event.' A possible theological way of understanding manifestations of evil saturated phenomena including the First World War is through the work of Walter Wink on the powers as they are described in the New Testament, and how they may fall. These powers, part of the creation, may be experienced as saturated phenomena manifesting either as good, or as fallen and in need of redemption (Wink 1992, pp. 9-10); for example the powers of community or nationhood may be good but if idolised may fall into structural or systemic evils such as xenophobia, racial discrimination or genocide.

The communal and collaborative projects described in Chapter 7 provide examples of dialogical phenomenology, an area not analysed by Marion but proposed by Stawarska (2009) on the grounds that traditional phenomenology has been too egocentric. It is possible to make connections with Bakhtin's dialogism, and Buber's *I-Thou* connectedness as described in

Chapter 6 with reference to painters and their subjects. However, collaborative working adds another layer of complexity to such interpersonal relationships, with different opportunities for co-operation and reciprocity. This is exemplified by personal experience with a primary school project in which my paintings were wholly dependent upon the children's requests for content - the striking and complex results could only have been achieved collaboratively. Theologically, one of the many interpretations of the *imago Dei* is the relationality of the *imago Trinitatis*, including both the *I-Thou* relationship between human beings and God, *and* between humans.

The 'mystery of appearance' is a phrase which was used by Francis Bacon to describe how, whilst painting, appearances can mysteriously come in with 'vividness' through 'accidental brush-marks' (Bacon 1973, cited by Sylvester 1993, p. 105). This is an experience familiar to many painters including myself, and a personal example is given in Section 2.2. What sort of phenomena are these appearances? They can be surprising and can provoke new trains of thought, changing the course of a painting; hence they seem to have characteristics of saturation. So not only can saturated phenomena be triggers for painting processes, they may also arise as a *result* of painting processes - and in turn go on to influence the progress of the work. Bearing these characteristics in mind, among other things as developed below, it is proposed that painting processes can be saturated phenomena in their own right.

The concept of painting processes as saturated phenomena suggests a way of thinking about how some art can be identified as 'great' (Heidegger), 'authentic' (Marion) or 'sustaining' (Read) - not by tackling the voluminous literature on philosophies of art and beauty but by looking for a relationship between the paintings in question and saturation during their making. Such a relationship first came to light in the analysis of Lake District paintings in Chapter 3, with evidence presented that some artists were open to the givens of nature whilst others following touristic guides could be responding to nature as a common rather than a saturated phenomenon, with the result that their painting processes would also be common. In related vein, boring

portraits as mentioned in Section 6. 6, of ‘figures frozen in the postures of importance imagined by either the subjects or their portrayer’ (Schama 2015, p. xxiii), may be related to the painter’s need to satisfy his or her paying client - the possible wounding effects of truthfully trying to paint what is given have been illustrated with the example of Graham Sutherland’s portrait of Winston Churchill in Section 6.6.

In contrast to common responses, freshness and newness are to the fore in Marion’s use of the word ‘authentic’ as first mentioned in Section 1.6 and as noted by Gschwandtner (2014a, p. 63), referring to paintings which are new phenomena, adding to the visible, and uncovering the unseen (Marion 2004, pp. 25-29). Gshwandtner (2014a, p. 70) makes a connection between this role of the artist and the theologian ‘who discovers phenomena of revelation and introduces them into visibility.’ What do artists themselves say? There are several examples which illustrate connections with Marion’s thought. First, in accord with the above remarks about adding to the visible, the Swiss-German painter and colour-theorist Paul Klee (1879-1940) said: ‘Art does not reproduce the visible, rather, it makes visible’ (Klee, cited by Gale 2013, p. 24); and the words of German expressionist Max Beckmann (1884-1950) are similar: ‘What I want to show in my work is the idea which hides itself behind so-called reality. I am seeking for the bridge which leads from the visible to the invisible’ (Beckmann 1964, p.132). Second, the figurative and symbolic Italian painter Francesco Clemente (1952-), when asked how he recognised a good painting by someone else, referred to two ways: ‘One is by remembering - if you remember, and continue to remember, the image. The other involves looking at a painting more than once and finding something new in it each time’ (Clemente 1984, cited by Politi and Kontova 1990, p. 134). This second way clearly expresses the power of saturation in the painting, particularly as described by Marion with reference to the ‘idol’ type introduced in Section 2.5. Third, summarising from Section 2.4, Marion’s phenomenological reductions of an imaginary painting conclude with the primacy of the *effect* which is given and which strikes the viewer, corresponding well with observations of Delacroix and Cézanne. In related vein, Delacroix suggested that too much detail, even if accurate, can distract

from the overall '*effect on the imagination*' (my italics), and that 'the finest works of art' are those that express the artist's imagination (Delacroix 1995, pp. 300, 284).

Chagall's opinion as mentioned in Section 4.6 was that greatness in paintings, as in other creative endeavours, depends on 'the power of the mystical, of feeling, of reason' (Chagall 1946, p.75); and the French sculptor and painter Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) offered similar thoughts when he said religion is 'the adoration of the unknown force which maintains the universal laws and which preserves the types of all beings [...] true artists are the most religious of men' (Rodin 1983, p. 80). The studies of individuals in Chapters 3 to 6 suggest that the majority had some sort of belief, albeit often unconventional, which would encourage openness to givenness and hence to the transcendent. Perhaps these observations offer a way of understanding the unbeliever Herbert Read, quoted in Section 4.6, who recognised that he was sustained by the work of God-affirmers more than the work of God-deniers. It could be that he was responding to a quality in the paintings which, however interpreted, made visible givenness coming from beyond the horizons of the painter's ego. In the cases of Bacon, who professed atheism, and Hockney, who said 'I've never really had faith' (Hockney 2017, cited by Greig 2017), there is nevertheless a receptivity to saturated givenness - the mystery of appearance in the painting process for Bacon and the abundance of nature's diversity for Hockney, which is consistent with this approach to understanding authenticity in paintings.

### **8.3 Between givenness and paintings**

The evidence from painting processes suggests two main areas where Marion's presentation of saturated phenomena may be critiqued, whilst at the same time accepting the fundamental concept of the possibility of surplus of intuition. First, there is the reception of givenness, and second, the hermeneutical role of the artist. Reception of givenness includes aspects both from the first spiral of nature and from phenomenology, with nature

being seen as those aspects of human biology which influence perception, as discussed in Chapter 1. Examples analysed from a scientific viewpoint include colour vision, the recognition of scenes in line drawings, and our reactions to different types of landscape in the light of Appleton's theories (Appleton 1996). It is concluded that innate responses, some probably originally conveying survival advantages in prehistoric environments, may contribute to painters' responses to subjects. Innate qualities are also important for mental functioning, with Kant's *a priori* categories of quantity, quality, relation and modality being understood as present in the mind before conscious experience of phenomena, together with Heidegger's *Stimmung*. There is also the question of psychological dispositions and conditions, at least partly innate. Summarising from Chapter 1, autobiographical evidence suggests that in a Jungian sense artists may be variously pre-disposed to thinking, feeling, sensing or intuiting approaches to painting. Further, psychological states may participate ambivalently in painting processes, being problematic for some artists but at the same time enhancing their sensitivity to particular givens. For example, Chapter 1 points to a likely link between Edvard Munch's *Scream* paintings and his recurrent anxiety.

There may be various interactions between givenness and intentionality as suggested by the classification of trajectories proposed in Section 2.2, a typology originally based on preliminary findings but subsequently supported and elaborated by the more detailed studies in Chapters 3 to 7. There are numerous examples of the givenness of phenomena occurring not only suddenly but sometimes as a more gradual and interactive process; in other words, some experiences do not fit either with Marion's earlier 'crashing on a screen' model (Marion 2002b p. 50); or his later distinction between common and saturated phenomenality (Marion 2008, p. 126). As exemplified in Chapter 3, it became clear that in this later development Marion *does* accept the role of the recipient as playing a part in determining how phenomena are received, however it is still a 'one or the other' scenario, common or saturated, whereas the more gradual painting processes seem to be in between. Some artists take months over a painting, receiving numerous diverse givens from one subject as exemplified by the work of Cézanne as

described in Chapter 3 and Freud in Chapter 6. Hence I suggest that another way of understanding such processes is in terms of the phenomenological reductions route described in Section 2.4, rather than the saturated phenomenon route. Indeed Merleau-Ponty encountered Cézanne's painting processes with excitement, for he saw in them an aesthetic acting out of phenomenological reductions (Merleau-Ponty 1993, pp. 64-66; Johnson 1993, pp. 7, 13; Toadvine 2013 pp. 110-111), albeit before Marion proposed his three-fold scheme. Some words of the English Catholic poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) may be used to illustrate the two routes from a theological point of view. The grandeur of God, or phenomenologically pure givenness, may flame out (a sudden overwhelming experience of saturation), or gather to a greatness like the ooze of oil (a slower reduction):

From *God's Grandeur*, dated 1877:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed...  
(Hopkins 1953, p. 27).

Related to this conclusion, in *Degrees of Givenness*, Gschwandtner argues against Marion's stance that saturated phenomena impose themselves on their own terms (e.g. Marion 2002b, p. 50; Marion 2004, p. 43), saying that this is too absolutist and does not take context sufficiently into account. Based on analyses of phenomena which Marion describes as saturated, she presents abundant evidence of diversity of givenness, and concludes that 'phenomena come in manifold degrees and levels of saturation' (Gschwandtner 2014a, p. 193). This is consistent with painters' experiences, which therefore provide further evidence for Gschwandtner's interpretation; and also help bring together the 'shook foil' and 'ooze of oil' interpretations.

Gschwandtner's approach is also relevant to artists' experiences of searching and finding being related to givenness. A number of examples from painters including Matisse and Auerbach were summarised in Section 2.2, and the subject re-emerged in Section 5.4 with war artist John Singer



Sargent's *Gassed* (1919). The starting point of this painting's [D] type trajectory was Sargent's intentionality, as an official war artist, of finding a suitable scene to paint. Personal experience of a [D] trajectory concerned a request to paint a tree with prominent roots, for a family in the aftermath of traumatic bereavement - they were thinking of deep spiritual roots being necessary to withstand storms. I searched locally, looking at many trees in situations where bank erosion had exposed their deep roots, but none seemed right. Then unexpectedly, when on a walking holiday, I found the 'right' tree, recognised immediately that this was the one, and took many photographs for future use. In some respects this 'given' had characteristics of Marion's 'crashing on a screen' model, but in other respects it could only have happened because my receptivity was already attuned by previous searching. From a theological viewpoint, Quash emphasises that at a fundamental level everything is both 'given' and 'found', and his 'contrast between givens and finds is best understood as a heuristic device' (Quash 2013b, p. 5). Using this approach in the present context, I suggest that 'finding' points to two possible relationships between the artist and givenness. The first, as exemplified above, indicates a rapprochement between the *disegno interno* and a particular external given sought by the painter, an idea introduced in Section 1.5. The second is more general and indicates a wide openness and receptivity of the artist to potential givens, for example we may imagine Cézanne saying that he found 'a stunning *motif* [...] Sainte-Victoire and the cliffs overlooking Beaufort' <sup>19</sup> not because he had been specifically searching for such a *motif* but because of his more general awareness of Mont Sainte-Victoire.

The second critique concerns the hermeneutical role of the artist. In previous chapters, numerous examples have emerged of factors which may intervene between the reception of givenness and the emergence of a finished painting. Considering the second spiral of culture, painters are inevitably exposed to the norms of the cultural climate of their time, one effect being at a fundamental practical level. Assuming that the painter has to make a living,

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<sup>19</sup> Cézanne 1878, cited by Danchev 2013, p. 171, as mentioned in Section 3.2.

there is the need to satisfy whoever is paying for the painting with respect to his or her expectations; portraits are probably particularly susceptible to this type of pressure. Other influences come from aesthetic theories espoused or consciously rejected by the painter. For example, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century theories of the sublime, the beautiful and the picturesque, notably those of Burke and Gilpin, influenced landscape painters including Turner and Gainsborough as discussed in Chapter 3. Examples from portrait painting (Chapter 6) are the idealisation of female portraits by Italian Renaissance painters, reflected in the work of Leonardo da Vinci; and the physiognomic theories of Le Brun which were challenged among others by Edward Burne-Jones. Similarly, there is the influence of other artists on the painter, positive or negative, for example the young Paul Nash admired William Blake, Samuel Palmer and the pre-Raphaelites; and Turner's *Deluge* seems to have been a response, a protest even, in the face of Poussin's *Deluge*. Artists may also differ in such diverse characteristics as curiosity, power of memory, capacity for imagination, and knowledge of relevant subjects, for example Turner's knowledge of colour theories and Cézanne's knowledge of geology. There may be interactions between any of these and givenness during painting processes, including receptivity to givenness in the first place.

Based on all the above, it is argued that the artist inevitably plays a hermeneutical role during painting processes. For example, a possible trajectory starting from the given of a biblical text has been described by Berdini as follows:

...the painter reads a text and translates his reading into a problem in representation, to which he offers a solution - the image. In that image, the beholder encounters not the text in the abstract, but the painter's reading of the text, so that the effect the image has on the beholder is a function of what the painter wants the beholder to experience in the text.  
(Berdini 2004, p. 170).

Chapter 4 demonstrates the diversity of artists' readings of biblical texts, which are sometimes original and sometimes influenced by existing theological opinions or pictures. Examples are the various depictions of the

Burning Bush understood as a pre-figuration of the virgin birth, an interpretation which has persisted from the 4<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. The artist's hermeneutical role may also operate whilst a painting is in progress; Martin Gayford in conversation with David Hockney came to a similar conclusion: 'A painter is not simply adding more and more paint [...] fresh thoughts and observations are going on, each adjusting the one that came before' (Gayford 2011, p.115). An example is provided by *Figure in a Landscape* (Weschke 1972), as described in Section 2.2. Whilst the work was in progress, Weschke came to realise that he was in effect pastiching Francis Bacon, following which he changed the painting's trajectory. Also in Section 2.2, personal examples are given of retrospective interpretations of finished paintings.

It may be concluded that evidence from painting processes supports Mackinlay's 'middle voice' arguments:

The choice of a middle voice means that neither phenomena nor the recipient are described in terms that are exclusively active or passive. It reflects the essential interrelatedness of phenomena, the subject to whom they appear, and the world in which the event of that appearing occurs. This interrelatedness is hermeneutic not only in the sense that phenomena receive an epistemic interpretation subsequent to their appearance, but also in the ontological sense that interpretation is a fundamental part of the appearance's structure. (Mackinlay 2010, p. 219).

This move towards interrelationship between saturated phenomena and recipients is reminiscent of the above-mentioned move of Gschwandtner (2014a, p. 193) concerning saturated phenomena themselves, that there are different degrees of saturation so an absolutist position should be avoided.

#### **8.4 Saturated phenomena and revelation**

Marion's use of the word 'revelation' can be confusing, sometimes having a general application and at other times referring specifically to 'a religious happening.' His widest definition can be interpreted as embracing such

innovations as the heliocentrism of Copernicus and Cubist painting, both of which were shocking to many at the time:

A genuine revelation imposes such novelty that its being challenged is intrinsic, and not accidental to it. This *rational* rule holds for every revelation, in the sciences, in the arts, in history, in the erotic phenomenon, etc., and consequently also, and therefore first and foremost, in a religious happening. (Marion 2016, p.4, Marion's italics).

The 'religious happening' is the sense in which Westphal (2007, p. 612) can say that Marion sees the task of phenomenology as the articulation of 'the possibility of revelation as a theistic case of a type of phenomenon that is not essentially theological.' In the present context, the important point is that rationality and revelation are brought together in a way which builds conceptual bridges between natural and revealed theology; and what Marion does in this respect with the givenness of saturated phenomena is in accord with the American theologian Garrett Green's view that 'natural theology' and 'positivism of revelation' are false alternatives: 'if revelation is a real event in the human world [...] it has *formal* similarities with other events in that world...' (Green 1998, p. 39). Hence this section proceeds from consideration of Marion's rational general rule through his four types of saturated phenomena, and thence to his religious happening which he associates with a combination of all four types, a 'paradox of paradoxes', saturated with intuition 'to the second degree' (Marion 2002a, p. 235). However, along the way two main points emerge from the painting evidence which critique Marion's characterisation of genuine revelation in the wider sense, as quoted above, and his fourfold typology. The first is a questioning that revelation must necessarily be challenged because of its novelty; and the second is the observation that individual saturated phenomena frequently manifest as more than one type, hence the typology is not so clear-cut as presented in *In Excess*.

In 'The Event or the Happening Phenomenon', Chapter 2 of *In Excess*, Marion addresses the category of *quantity*, with reference to phenomena which are unrepeatable, eliciting inexhaustible hermeneutics and unforeseeable in terms of detailed unfolding (Marion 2002b, p. 36). Evidence

presented in Chapters 3 to 7 indicates that nature, the Bible, the First World War, portraiture and communal or collaborative painting may all involve this type, though not necessarily exclusively. For example, nature is ever-changing (event type), with quantity being experienced through the time dimension and being added to quality (idol type) without replacing it; this may be expressed in paint with multiple expressions of the same phenomenon, for example William Heaton Cooper's series of the Langdale Pikes as discussed in Chapter 3. Cézanne dealt with the time dimension differently in those Mont Sainte-Victoire paintings where one of the aims was the encompassing of change in a single painting. The same two approaches can be seen in portraiture as mentioned in Chapter 6, for example Picasso's multiple paintings of his companion Fernande Olivier (Weiss *et al* 2003) may be compared with *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2* (Duchamp 1912) which conveys movement and hence time within a single canvas. Movement and change may also be seen in Lucian Freud's figurative style, experienced as a process by Martin Gayford during the year and a half he sat for two portraits by Freud. 'A painted image, certainly one by LF, is different in nature from an instantaneous image such as a photograph', for it incorporates 'innumerable visual sensations and thoughts' (Gayford 2012, p.145).

It was suggested above that the word 'challenged' in Marion's statement about revelation in the wider sense is not necessarily the most apt in all cases. For example, 'eye-opening' might be more appropriate for some nature paintings, exemplified by David Hockney's later landscapes which have been called 'revelatory' by Hepworth Wakefield Gallery director Simon Wallis (cited by Leach 2015), and by art critic Olivia Laing (Laing 2017). Hockney's 2017 Tate retrospective exhibition including these landscapes with their seasonal variations was enormously popular, suggesting that whatever is revelatory about them is an attractive disclosure of the saturation, interest and beauty of nature. Georgia O'Keeffe was another eye-opener; she certainly had the idea of making people look:

Nobody sees a flower - really - it is so small - we haven't time - and to see takes time [...] So I said to myself - I'll paint what I see - what the flower is to me, but I'll paint it big and they will be surprised into taking time to look at it - I will make even busy New Yorkers take time to see what I see of flowers... (O'Keeffe, cited by Tate 2016).

Whilst it could be argued that the landscapes or the flowers were visible or known to be there anyway, even if unnoticed by many, the painter draws attention to them and may lead people to see them in a new way.

However, real challenge does exist elsewhere. For example, Section 5.4 mentions *Paths of Glory* by the First World War artist Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson; it shows two corpses in the mud and permission to exhibit was refused by the censors. This painting, like some of Otto Dix's pictures of putrefying corpses, is shocking, challenging and revelatory because it reveals what was concealed at the time by the art of the patriotic posters, and which continues to be concealed in some commemorative artworks such as *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* (Cummins and Piper 2014), an installation of red ceramic poppies created at the Tower of London for the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. Whilst acclaimed by many, it was criticised as a 'prettified and toothless war memorial' by Jones (2014b). Perhaps there has always been an almost unrecognised tacit agreement to try and keep some realities hidden, for various motives, because to see them in all their horror would be overwhelmingly disturbing or demoralising. Evidence in Section 6.4 suggests that childbirth, a saturated event analysed by Marion (2002b, pp. 41-44), is another area where paintings can shock and challenge. They are revelatory because they show what is normally unseen and remind us how we are given to ourselves through flesh and blood and pain. Ghislaine Howard's comment, 'I feel privileged that, as a woman, I have been able to make visible what previously has been, to some degree, invisible' (Howard 1993a) continues the previously discussed idea of paintings adding to the visible.

Painting processes identified in their own right as saturated phenomena, with the painters open to givenness and not merely producing 'technological

objects' as discussed in Section 3.4, also appear to be primarily of the event type for the following reasons. First, they obviously take place over a period of time, whether this is an hour or less, or a year or more. Second, they are unrepeatable, for each painting is the unique result of an enormous number of mental and physical interactions, both conscious and unconscious. Third, they elicit inexhaustible hermeneutics, partly because there are so many influences which bear upon the painter between initial givenness and finished painting. Fourth, they are unforeseeable in terms of detailed unfolding, as expressed by many artists including Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud: 'I think half the point of painting a picture is that you don't know what will happen. Perhaps if painters did know how it was going to turn out they wouldn't bother actually to do it' (Freud 2004, cited by Gayford 2012, p. 81). Hence painting processes may be revelatory for the painters and some personal examples were described in Chapter 2; it is not just a question of finished paintings potentially being revelatory to viewers.

In 'The Idol or the Radiance of the Painting', Chapter 3 of *In Excess*, Marion suggests that the idol as a saturated phenomenon is a revealing of the invisible by the artist, with the painting characterised by bedazzlement and fascination (Marion 2002b, p. 60), the desire to return and look again, the satisfaction of the viewer's gaze by the painting, and hence the 'capturing' of the gaze. As mentioned in Section 2.5, some evolution of the idol concept may be discerned in Marion's earlier writings, but in the end there is 'an entirely positive sense' (Gshwandtner 2014c, p. 308), hence retention of the word 'idol' seems to be unsatisfactory because of pejorative connotations. As already intimated, some nature paintings may combine these characteristics with those of the event type of saturated phenomenon. However, the characterisation is particularly reminiscent of the collaborative paintings produced with primary school children as described in Section 7.3. People are attracted, initially perhaps because these paintings are sunny and brightly coloured; but their content has led some adult viewers to report that each time they look at them they see something new. Here are examples of paintings which are saturated because they captivate, because they keep on giving, and because, with a succession of viewers, they are

never seen exhaustively. They function as idols to the extent that they fill the viewers' gazes and reflect back to them in various ways, for example recognisable features from local landscapes, and of course the numerous depictions of the children's suggestions. They may be revelatory in the sense of eye-opening, for example suggesting connections between the local and the universal, and showing adult viewers what is important in the children's worlds. Further, in spite of their obvious idol characteristics, they also provide more evidence that paintings may not fall easily into one or other of Marions's four types, for within them both event and icon may be found. For example, Jesus as event is included in Figure 7.8 as a time lapse series with Jesus on a hill talking to people, Jesus in a boat talking to people on the shore, the crucifixion and the empty tomb; and iconicity as discussed below resulted from the request to include God as a 'misty face' in the sky. Gshwandtner (2014a, p.70) says 'the artist presumably is only active in regard to the second type of saturated phenomenon, namely the work of art', but the evidence of paintings is that the artist may be active more comprehensively, for painting processes may make visible *all* the other types.

In 'Flesh or the Givenness of the Self', Chapter 4 in *In Excess*, Marion adopts an absolutist position concerning one's own flesh because it does not correspond to any of Kant's three types of relationship, rather 'it gives me to myself in giving itself to me' (Marion 2002b, p. 99). It is surely indisputable that without it we could not experience any other phenomena at all. Marion goes on to analyse personal suffering, pleasure and ageing on the grounds that these phenomena can only manifest 'in the milieu of my flesh' (Marion 2002b, p. 92); all these conditions of people sensing themselves have been depicted in self-portraits which point to a grappling with the meaning of embodiment. Rembrandt stands out as a self-portraitist, and his *Self Portrait at the Age of 63* (Rembrandt 1669) is particularly moving; it is the year of his death and he gazes at the viewer reflectively, truthfully, revealingly, so that 'we learn what it feels to be old' (Cumming 2010, p. 88).



However, reflections on flesh as a saturated phenomenon can be taken further than Marion in other directions. First, flesh includes DNA and therefore our sensory organs, the enormously complex neurochemical basis of our brains, and our innate predispositions, as mentioned in Chapter 1. If revelation is to occur, whether in Marion's general sense or as a 'religious happening', these are the pathways through which it must come. In other words, contrary to Descartes' association of the pineal gland with the soul (Lokhorst and Kaitaro 2001, pp. 6-18), it is not possible to identify any separate 'spiritual' mechanism, no dedicated God-channel, through which revelation may occur. This viewpoint is consistent with Marion's understanding of saturated phenomena as including but not restricted to theistic cases; also Green's above-mentioned view that revelation should be formally similar to other real events in the world.

Second, flesh is more inter-relational in human terms than indicated by Marion. For my flesh to give me to myself as a unique individual depends not only on the 'original taking flesh' of birth (Marion 2002b, 98) but on all that has gone before as depicted, for example, in Frida Kahlo's paintings of conception and foetal development as described in Section 6.4. There is further dependence on the years of nurture after birth, for the proper development of language and hence thought, of interpretation of sensory stimuli, and interpretation of the wider world are processes requiring extensive interaction with parents, teachers and others. Moreover they are processes affecting neurochemistry, *flesh*, in the sense of establishing patterns and memories. The primary school project described in Section 7.3 provides clear evidence of the widening of horizons with age and hence, I suggest, the children being increasingly given to themselves as they explore who they are. Another dimension is suggested by the *Good Samaritan* pictures discussed in Section 4.4, and the portraits of people who have been grievously disfigured and undergone reconstructive surgery, as described in Section 6.4. In all such cases, the intervention of another person literally helps the afflicted one by giving them back their flesh to the best of the helper's ability. From a different direction and following a detailed philosophical analysis, Mackinlay concluded that:

Marion may be correct to describe flesh as an experience of self-givenness, but this very self-givenness is always given with the givenness of the world. The fundamental relatedness that underlies the phenomenon of flesh means that, far from being an absolute phenomenon, it is inescapably hermeneutic. Mackinlay (2010, p. 158).

Third, flesh is more inter-relational in environmental terms than indicated by Marion. There is a continual flux of elements between our flesh and the environment, through breathing, eating and dispelling waste products; and we are completely dependent on the land and seas for our food. This close relationship tends to be forgotten in contemporary urban existence but stands out in many depictions of agricultural existence, for example some of Constable's landscapes, such as *Ploughing Scene in Suffolk* (Constable 1824-1825), and van Gogh's peasant paintings such as *The Sower* (van Gogh 1888). These observations are in accord with Gschwandtner (2014a, p. 97) who concluded that phenomenological consideration of flesh needed to include our grounding 'in the "earthiness" of nature, from which we come, with which we are intimately connected in many ways, which sustains our very life, and to which we ultimately return.'

In 'The Icon or the Endless Hermeneutic', Chapter 5 in *In Excess*, Marion does not specifically discuss icons in the church context, but has much to say about faces more generally, about how a counter-gaze may rise up in the void of the other's pupils, and about how envisaging a face demands endless hermeneutics (Marion 2002b, pp. 116; 123). Consistent with this I argue in Section 6.7 that no clear distinction can be made between portraits and liturgical icons in terms of what the pictures give, for some portraits are icons in the broader sense of the word, being faces in which counter-gazes arise. Also, some of the paintings discussed are intermediate in *style* between portraits and liturgical icons, a finding consistent with that of Marsengill (2013, p. 300) who came to a similar conclusion with respect to Byzantine portraiture. I conclude that according to context, counter-gazes may be interpreted as divine or human; or as the divine through the human: 'in each *Thou* we address the eternal *Thou*' (Buber 1958, p.130, Buber's italics).

A counter-gaze may be both a trigger at the beginning of the painting process or may mysteriously appear whilst painting. My own experience of the latter is twofold. As described in Section 7.5, I suddenly became aware of a counter-gaze whilst painting the children's request for God's face in the sky, in the collaborative painting *Our Wonderful World* (Figure 7.8). Hence this particular painting, for which the process was rather free and experimental, arrived at threefold saturation: as idol certainly, but also with parts of the picture being the event type and with the face an icon. Another counter-gaze appeared when I was painting an icon of St Francis within a church context as described in Section 6.5 (Figure 6.1), in this case the process being thoroughly traditional and *aiming* at evoking a counter-gaze. It is suggested in Section 6.7 that icon painters are not individualistically *controlling* such appearances but are prayerfully acting as a channel within and for the body of the church. In the case of *Our Wonderful World*, I was likewise not acting as an individualistic artist but was trying to express what was important to the children. From the phenomenological viewpoint, if iconicity is indeed a saturated phenomenon then it is given from beyond any horizons which we are able to impose and so there is always the possibility that it may strike the painter whatever the process.

Can Marion's concepts of the counter-gaze of the icon, the reversal of intentionality, be extended to paintings which do not involve faces? It was mentioned in Section 8.2 that Marion recognises the sublime in terms of saturated phenomena, indeed he says about the sublime that 'The relation of our faculty of judgment to the phenomenon is therefore reversed to the point that it is the phenomenon that from now on "gazes" at the I in "respect" (Marion 2002a, p. 220, Marion's inverted commas). This leaves open possibilities such as the iconicity of natural phenomena - for example the viewer of a sublime landscape may feel that it is limitless and awe-inspiring, evoking insecurity and fear. This is not a counter-gaze from a face, but it may be experienced as the other, as a void or a presence, and such feelings may trigger painting processes for some artists, for example Caspar David Friedrich as discussed in Chapter 3. The biblical view is that God does communicate through nature, and this is discussed in Section 3.5 with

reference to Catholic sacramental and Orthodox iconic viewpoints, the latter being that 'creation is a theophany, a revelation or showing forth of God' (Hart 2014, p. 114). It may also be possible to extend iconicity to Bacon's 'mystery of appearance' when this is experienced as something 'other' but not from a face.

To return to Marion's theistic use of 'revelation', it is necessary to recall that in *Being Given*, what he calls the phenomenon of revelation is a combination of all four of the above types of saturated phenomenon, a 'paradox of paradoxes', saturated with intuition 'to the second degree' (Marion 2002a, p. 235). He gives Jesus Christ as example *par excellence*, with fourfold manifestation as event, transfigured visibility, not of this world, and the Other who regards me (Marion 2002a, pp. 236-241; Robinette 2007, pp. 93-97). This is a high point, for Marion describes his 'entire project' as 'directed to liberating possibility in phenomenality, to unbinding the phenomenon from the supposed equivalencies that limit its deployment':

...if an actual revelation must, can, or could have been given in phenomenal apparition, it could have, can, or will be able to do so only by giving itself according to the type of the paradox *par excellence* - such as I will describe it. Phenomenology cannot decide if a revelation can or should ever give itself, but it (and it alone) can determine that, in case it does, such a phenomenon of revelation should assume the figure of the paradox of paradoxes. If revelation there must be (and phenomenology has no authority to decide this), then it will assume, assumes, or assumed the figure of paradox of paradoxes, according to an essential law of phenomenality. In this sense, since revelation remains a variation of saturation, itself a variation of the phenomenality of the phenomenon inasmuch as given, it still remains inscribed within the transcendental conditions of possibility.  
(Marion 2002a, pp. 234-235).

However, as highlighted by Mason (2014, p. 31), Marion also and somewhat confusingly refers to the icon, that is the fourth type of saturated phenomenon, as gathering within it 'the modes of saturation of the other three types' (Marion 2002a, p. 234). Hence the three ways in which Marion uses 'revelation' phenomenologically are first, the breaking in of novelty into culture (Marion 2016, p. 4); second, the icon which gathers within it the different modes of saturation; and third, saturation with intuition 'to the second degree' as exemplified above all by Jesus Christ. Identifying painting

processes as saturated phenomena as has been done above, and arguing first that they may be a vehicle for novelty, second that they may involve various combinations of Marion's four types of saturated phenomena, and third that the fourth type or icon is not necessarily distinguishable from Marion's 'saturation to a second degree', brings us to a philosophical basis for accepting revelation through painting processes as a possibility. Further, there is the route of phenomenological reductions as described in Section 2.4, which can arrive at revelation through the recession of intentionality rather than the overwhelming of intentionality by saturated givenness.

Additionally, Marion refers to Revelation with a capital R as actuality, not to be confounded with revelation with a lower case r meaning the *possibility* for Revelation. He makes it clear that phenomenology alone is not competent to judge if theistic revelation has actually taken place; that is the work of theology, and ultimately faith (Marion 2002a, p. 5). He expands this point as follows:

Revelation (of God by himself, *theological*), if it takes place, will assume the phenomenal figure of the phenomenon of revelation, of the paradox of paradoxes, of saturation to the second degree [...] But phenomenology, which owes it to phenomenality to go this far, does not go beyond and should never pretend to decide the fact of Revelation, its historicity, its actuality, or its meaning [...] The fact (if there is one) of Revelation exceeds the scope of all science, including that of phenomenology. (Marion 2002a, p. 367, note 90).

In fact, theology *has*, in many cases, decided that art, and hence painting processes, can be Revelatory, for example in *Tradition and Imagination* Brown (1999, p. 326) suggests that art can be a channel for 'continuing revelation', based on the historic incarnational argument that God, 'in sketching or defining himself through the human, had in effect endorsed all that was best in human creativity.' Artists through the ages have gone further than merely illustrating biblical texts, they have interpreted them (visual exegesis as mentioned in Section 8.2), and hence are channels through which continuing Revelation may flow. Moreover, this need not be limited to biblically inspired paintings. Harries (1993, pp. 101-102) suggested that any work of art, whatever its content, has a *spiritual* dimension (my italics), because 'artistic form is a human reflection of the work of the divine *Logos*',

and similarly Tillich (1989, p. 33) sees all artistic creation as expressing qualities of 'ultimate concern.' Williams (2005, p. 5), in his examination of Maritain's work, suggests that one of the 'serious underlying questions' it raises is 'whether there is an unavoidably theological element to all artistic labour.'

Accepting that phenomenology alone cannot judge the veracity of theistic revelation, and recognising that with the subject matter of this thesis it is impossible to arrive at 'objective reality', it is nevertheless possible to address the question of verification through 'triangulation' (Denzin and Lincoln 2008, pp. 7-8). In other words, increased depth and confidence in understanding saturated phenomena may be gained by comparing results from different viewpoints and methodologies. The following triangulation results have emerged during this study:

- The documented evidence of many artists working in different styles is that they experience painting processes as open-ended and not subject to their detailed pre-planning, this is consistent with my own experience and leads to the proposal that painting processes are saturated phenomena.
- Evidence from different artists suggests that they experience nature as a saturated phenomenon, as I do myself. This view of nature was arrived at independently and based on different evidence from Gschwandtner's proposal along these lines (Gschwandtner 2014b), a paper which I located retrospectively.
- My identification of nested saturated phenomena seems to be related to the hierarchical ideas of Pseudo-Dionysius, who understood hierarchy not in terms of status but of relationships with God. I was not aware of Pseudo-Dionysius' ideas when the idea of nesting occurred.

- On the basis of investigating portraiture (Chapter 6) I concluded that Buber's *I-Thou* relationship could be understood in terms of saturation; this suggestion, arrived at by a different route, had been previously made by Harding (2013). I became aware of his paper retrospectively.
- Evidence from painting processes supports Mackinlay's arguments for the hermeneutic role of the recipient (Mackinlay 2010), and Gschwandtner's proposals for degrees of givenness (Gschwandtner 2014a), in contrast to Marion's more absolutist approach. The evidence also supports the different critiques of Marion's analysis of flesh by Mackinlay (2010, p. 158) and Gschwandtner (2014a, p. 97). Mackinlay and Gschwandtner are foremost commentators on Marion's work, and in these cases my analysis of the painting evidence overlapped with my becoming aware of their work.
- The idea that there may be no clear distinction between some portraits and liturgical icons in terms of Marion's saturated counter-gaze was stimulated by a visit to the National Portrait Gallery; this led to a literature search and the discovery that Marsengill (2013) had come to a related conclusion with respect to Byzantine portraits and icons. She had, moreover, identified the personal devotions of viewers as part of the constitution of icons, consistent with my own conclusions concerning the iconicity of the more legendary saints.

It remains to consider the possibility of 'theologically dubious innovation' as pointed out by the iconographer Aidan Hart (Hart, 2011, p. 29) - could this, as well as continuing biblical revelation, be propagated by art? In this respect an interesting example is the very long tradition of painting icons and other pictures making connections between Mary and the Burning Bush, as described in Section 4.3. This example of seeing pre-figurings in the Hebrew Scriptures pointing to New Testament events would presumably be a theologically dubious innovation from the point of view of Jewish scholars. It

may also be seen as dubious by any who do not accept the virgin birth as objective reality, for example Borg (1999, pp. 179-186). However, as suggested in Section 4.6, the revelatory message of the artworks could be in the different direction of making visible a need for female images to balance male concepts of God. In more general terms, it is consistent with the concept of revelation for paintings to open up different directions of understanding.

## 8.5 The role of imagination

In his discussion of art as continuing revelation, Brown (1999, p. 6) suggests that 'One of the principal ways in which God speaks to humanity is through the imagination.' This raises questions about the role of the painter's imagination; it was included in the factors which may intervene between givenness and finished paintings (Section 8.3), and demands further investigation because it has cropped up naturally in a number of ways in previous chapters; the fact that this did not result from any initial planning to include an 'imagination thread' cannot be ignored. Moreover, what has emerged suggests the working of artists' imaginations in ways which relate to discussions in the theological literature. Most generally, Green, drawing heavily from *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Kuhn 1996), identified the religious imagination as paradigmatic: 'the taking of paradigms to explore the patterns of the larger world' (Green 1998, p. 69). Kuhn contrasted 'normal' science, the accumulation of scientific knowledge within the framework of unquestioned basic assumptions, with 'paradigm shifts' which are major changes in worldview. A well-known example is the 16<sup>th</sup> century Copernican Revolution in which the geocentric model of the solar system was replaced by the heliocentric model. Everyday experience of the sun rising in the east and setting in the west remained the same, but could now be explained in terms of a different underlying pattern; this opened up new possibilities for theorising and investigation. As with science, within the history of art paradigm shifts may occur when artists experiment, for example with different viewpoints (multi-point compared with one-point



perspective), colour theories, or depictions of space and time. New ways of painting do not thereby *replace* the old, in the same way that scientific shifts do not render all previous methodologies obsolete (Root-Bernstein 1984, pp. 116-117), but there is an enrichment of ways of seeing.

Other aspects of imagination have emerged in previous chapters. The Catholic imagination (Greeley 2001) as discussed in Section 3.5 is associated with a recognition of God's presence in the world, which artists may help to make visible though not necessarily in overtly religious ways. The above-mentioned work of Brown (1999) was first mentioned in Section 4.6, with respect to his arguments for continuing revelation through the hermeneutical role of artists' imaginations in depicting biblical texts. In war paintings as analysed in Section 5.6, it is possible to find visual representations of the prophetic imagination (Brueggemann 2001), and the hopeful imagination (Brueggemann 1986); and the ironic imagination (Lynch 1973) was identified in Section 6.5. Particular reference is made in Section 7.4 to the dialogic imagination (Bakhtin 1981) and pioneering studies on imagination by Kant, Piaget and Vygotsky.

In appealing to the faculty of imagination, theologians seem to be opting for a Vygotskian model without saying so, rather than Piaget's model with its implication that childish imagination is meant to be gradually replaced by realistic adult thought. In essence Vygotsky took a developmental holistic view, in which imagination is connected with the development of speech and the making of meaning, is basic to creativity, and evolves with experience becoming increasingly linked with intellectual functions:

It is precisely human creative activity that makes the human being a creature oriented toward the future, creating the future and thus altering his own present. This creative activity, based on the ability of our brain to combine elements, is called imagination or fantasy in psychology. Typically, people use the terms imagination or fantasy to refer to something quite different than what they mean in science. In every day life, fantasy or imagination refer to what is not actually true, what does not correspond to reality, and what, thus, could not have any serious practical significance. But in actuality, imagination, as the basis of all creative activity, is an important component of absolutely all aspects of cultural life, enabling artistic, scientific, and technical creation alike. In this sense, absolutely everything around us that was created by the hand of man,

the entire world of human culture, as distinct from the world of nature, all this is the product of human imagination and of creation based on this imagination. (Vygotsky 2004, pp. 9-10. First published 1967).

As indicated in Section 7.4, Vygotsky went on to suggest that children imagine less than adults because they have less experience; however they have greater faith in their imaginings and less control over them than do adults (Vygotsky 2004, pp. 33-34).

Imagination makes us human. Consonant with Vygotsky's thinking, and continuing from the introduction of human evolution and 'the Adam and Eve' moment in Section 1.6, a '*new power of the imagination*' emerged during the Upper Palaeolithic around 40,000 years ago, with the evidence including the proliferation of vivid cave art in south-west Europe, and ritualised burials with grave goods (Harris (2000, pp. ix – xi, my italics). Harris contrasts this human 'shift of cognitive gear' with its apparent lack in the Neanderthals who co-existed with *Homo sapiens* at this time. The difference cannot be attributed to brain size, for in this respect *Homo neanderthalensis* and *Homo sapiens* were similar. It is only possible to theorise about what happened, for example Mithen (1998, pp. 171-175) suggests that in humans there was a 'final major re-design of the mind', allowing the interaction of various specialised intelligences which had formerly been isolated from each other. In *The Three Spirals* model such a shift is visualised as the point at which the 'culture' spiral starts emerging from the 'nature' spiral. Similarly in anthropological vein, Green does not see the imagination as 'some kind of arcane faculty or sixth sense' but 'the anthropological point of contact for divine revelation.' In other words, the human faculty of imagination is the locus, 'simply the place where it happens - better, the way in which it happens' (Green 1998, pp. 69, 40). Avis agrees, saying that divine revelation is primarily given in ways which address the imagination (Avis 1999, p. 3). As for exploring what actually does happen with respect to painting processes, this should be grounded in what artists themselves have said. In what follows, van Gogh argues for the essential dynamic relationship between productive imagination and the human model or nature, consonant with Kant's view of imagination as 'second nature' or the surpassing of

nature (Kant 2008, p.143); and Degas and Kitaj point to the equally dynamic relationship between imagination and memory:

Two things that in my opinion reinforce one another and remain eternally true are: Do not quench your inspiration and your imagination, do not become the slave of your model; and again: Take the model and study it, otherwise your inspiration will never become plastically concrete.

Though I believe that the best pictures are more or less freely painted by heart, still I *cannot* divorce the principle that one can never study and toil too much from nature. The greatest, most powerful imaginations have at the same time made things directly from nature which strike one dumb.

(Van Gogh 1882, 1885, cited by Roskill 1983, pp. 173, 243. Van Gogh's italics).

It is all very well to copy what you see, but it is much better to draw only what you still see in your memory. This is a transformation in which imagination collaborates with memory. Then you only reproduce what has struck you, that is to say the essential, and so your memories and your fantasy are freed from the tyranny which nature holds over them.

(Degas, cited by Barnes 1990b, p. 40).

The following transcript is from R B Kitaj in conversation with Michael Peppiatt. The painting is a brothel scene, *Smyrna Greek* (Kitaj 1976-77):

RK There's a girl in the doorway and this is a client coming down the stairs.

MP Those are from memory or imagination?

RK Memory and imagination. I look up some details from the vast archives I keep...

(Conversation 1987, cited by Peppiatt 2012, p. 20).

The role of memory is inherent in Kant's reproductive imagination (Kant 1999, pp. 239, 257), and its importance in painting has been exemplified in Section 5.3 with reference to Stanley Spencer's 'cavernous memory' from which he drew for his Sandham Memorial Chapel paintings. Kitaj's mention of archives is a reminder that painters often support memories by referring to records in various media. An example from Section 3.3 is Turner's pencil sketch which was subsequently worked up into the oil painting *Buttermere Lake, with part of Cromackwater, Cumberland, a Shower* (Turner 1798), and a further example from Section 5.2 is Nash's watercolour and ink sketch for *The Mule Track* (Nash 1918b). In both these cases the finished paintings exhibit reproductive groundwork from the preliminary *in situ* sketches, and subsequent productive imagination which adds or changes objects,

colouring, contrast and so on. The original records may also be photographic, for example my tree photographs used for *The Presence of the Lord* as described in Section 2.2, serving both as a basis for the painting and as a springboard for productive imaginative development. In addition, exemplifying Vygotsky's reference to imaginative products made possible through the experiences of others (as mentioned in Section 7.4), there is a wealth of images available in books and on the internet, the latter being a resource which proved its worth during the collaborative paintings with primary school children.

In other words, productive imagination needs to be fed, and this may happen from immediate experience of givens, as when the painter is working in front of his or her subject, through memory via the routes of reproductive imagination or records of previous experiences, or through the interaction of both givens and memory.

## **8.6 Around the hermeneutical spiral**

It has become apparent that there is a substantial mainly British and North American literature characterised by theological exploration of the role of imagination, relevant to revelation through painting in a way which differs from the continental phenomenological approach epitomised by Marion's work. The former hardly refers to givenness, or the latter to the role of the imagination. Yet the two need each other, for imagination needs the fuel provided by givenness, and givenness needs a human faculty into which it may be received and used. Hence I propose bringing the two approaches together as illustrated in Figure 8.1. The givenness of phenomena in Marion's sense is primary in terms of the abundance which impinges on persons from outside themselves; and saturated givenness flooding any horizons which we may impose provides a philosophical basis for the possibility of revelation. Imagination in the anthropological sense is primary in terms of the human faculty responsible for receiving and patterning or re-patterning given experiences, feelings, memories and knowledge, in other

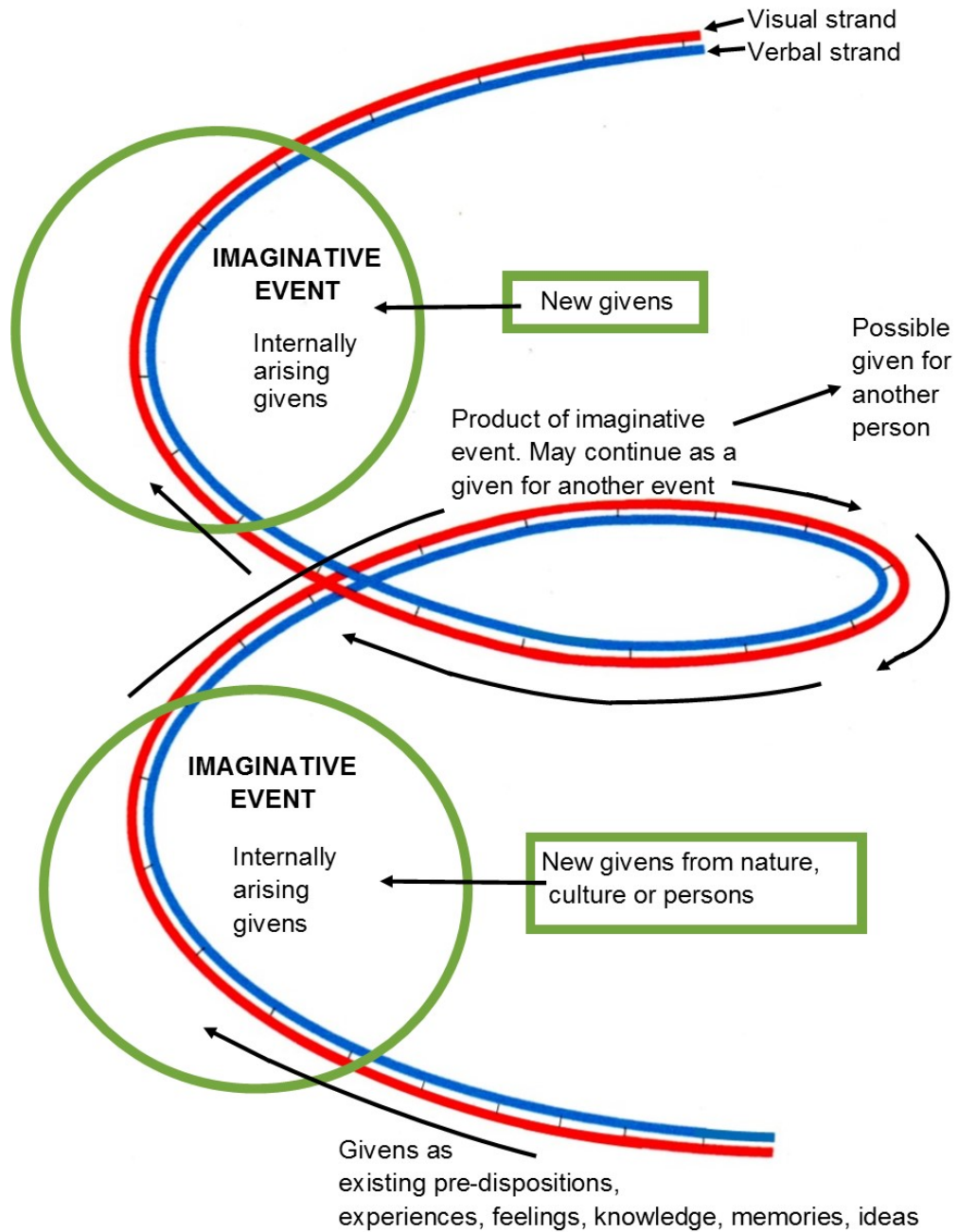


Figure 8.1. Around the hermeneutical spiral.

The green boxes stand for primary givens from saturated phenomena, and the green circles stand for primary loci of imagination where revelation may happen.

words providing a locus for possible revelation. However, givenness and imagination are not equal partners, givenness comes first because imagination itself is a given through the flesh, through the structure and functioning of the brain. Theology may be understood as a tool available for the imagination to use in its patterning of experience.

As suggested in Figure 8.1, the locus of imagination is never empty, because even without a new experience of givenness, it has already received givens from the past and so draws from existing knowledge and memories, coloured by any individual innate pre-dispositions. New givens may arise internally from this material, through the re-patterning work of the imagination. The trajectories of painting processes may incorporate such internally arising givens, or new givens from outside, or both, a conclusion consistent with the classification of trajectories proposed in Section 2.2 and with what Brown says more specifically about continuing developments in biblical revelation:

As for what stimulates such developments, sometimes the pressure will have come purely from within the tradition in a refocusing of the balance of how the existing narrative is read, but perhaps more commonly it will be a matter of the dynamic of an inherited past interacting with fresh stimuli for change from outside, from the wider surrounding culture. (Brown 1999, p. 25).

In other words, having earlier pointed to the importance of the imagination, he is now saying that it needs stimulation, and in terms of Marion's phenomenology, this comes from givenness especially from saturated phenomena, the diversity of which with regard to biblical paintings could include texts and traditions but also, as exemplified in Chapter 4, other phenomena including existing paintings, folk art from various parts of the world, science fiction, and contemporary racial tensions. A point of contact with earlier thinking is through the American theologian Ray Hart, who saw revelation as embracing 'that which incites the hermeneutical spiral' and which drives 'the movement of the hermeneutical spiral itself' (Hart 2001, p. 99, first published 1968). This is a source which fed both into my Figure 8.1 depiction, and into Williams' thinking:

Revelation, on such an account, is essentially, to do with what is *generative* in our experience - events or transactions in our language that break existing frames of reference and initiate new possibilities of life [...] we could say that revelation decisively advances or extends debate, extends rather than limits the range of ambiguity and conflict in language. It poses fresh questions rather than answering old ones.

(Williams 2000, p.134, William's italics).

Looking at painting processes through the thought of Brown, Hart and Williams, revelation may be linked with both the beginning of a painting and its development. At the beginning, revelation is the givenness received into the locus of imagination as a generative event, and subsequently it is a driver of continuing imaginative development. The latter, as is evident from previous chapters, may encompass visual-verbal dialogue with oneself, with many other possible inputs into the locus, and with the emerging painting itself. In the hermeneutical spiral envisaged in Figure 8.1, external products of imaginative events as exemplified by paintings, may feed back into another imaginative event in the same person, together with the internal products, that is, the additional experience, knowledge and understanding which have accrued from the painting process. Moreover, external products also become available as givens for other people.

Gathering up the various references, it is perhaps relatively easy to think of revelation in terms of the givenness of an originary phenomenon, a fresh stimulus, a generative event, or an inciter, because these terms can all be understood in a secular way as eye-opening events or paradigm shifts. When, as mentioned in Section 8.4, art gallery director Simon Wallis and art critic Olivia Laing referred to David Hockney's later landscapes as revelatory, they were probably using the word in this secular sense but at the same time it could be understood in a theological sense. For from what Hockney says about nature there can be little doubt that he experiences it as saturated, as at least two of Marion's types - idol and event. Hence there is an inescapably hermeneutical dimension to revelation, implicit in Marion's insistence that it is not within the scope of phenomenology to decide if revelation has actually taken place, it can only argue for the *possibility* of revelation through saturated phenomena. Neither the phenomenology of

saturated givenness nor the anthropology of imagination imply *per se* that revelation must occur, or that if it does, it is divine. That is the work of theology, and ultimately faith, as Marion makes clear in *Being Given*: 'I am not broaching revelation in its theological pretension to the truth, something that faith alone can dare to do' (Marion 2002a, p. 5).

In other words, whilst phenomenology and anthropology can provide a route to the brink of divine revelation commensurate with natural theology, the final step of recognising God in givenness, saturated phenomena, generative events and so on is a step of faith. With respect to Figure 8.1, it is suggested that faith finds its home within the loci of imagination, in interactive relationships with imagination and experience; this suggestion is consistent with some existing theological thinking. As outlined by Lynch (1973, p. 14), faith can be seen as a creative paradigm which activates the imagination and within which we imagine and experience the world. Avis (1999, p. 79) turns this round by saying that imagination is the holistic faculty which 'grasps the goal of the venture of faith as a whole, integrating all those elements that relate specifically to the thinking or feeling or willing faculties.' The evidence from many artists' lives as described in previous chapters is that their faith, however unconventional, questioning and sometimes in biblical protest mode, helped constitute their paintings; this reflects the words of the Scottish theologian Donald MacKinnon (1913-1994) who in asking the question 'Does faith create its own objects?', answered it in the affirmative through his understanding of Jesus' life (MacKinnon 2011, pp. 209, 215): 'Jesus' self-interpretation is the working out of a faith truly creative of its objects. For what he believes concerning the Father who sent him is what he achieves in his fulfilment of the mission laid upon him.'

In summary, the aims of this thesis were to examine the experiences of painting especially 'givenness', and to investigate possible relationships with Christian understanding of revelation. Against a background of tension between traditional views about revelation and natural theology, Jean-Luc Marion's concept of saturated phenomena has been explored as a way forward, a bridge. Such phenomena are understood as giving themselves



with a distinctive overflow of givenness which can overwhelm recipients' previous concepts or plans; in phenomenological language they give intuition which exceeds intentionality.

*The Three Spirals* visual model, following Popper's Three Worlds ontology, provided a structure for considering diverse paintings from the worlds of nature, culture, and persons. The resulting chapters drew from the words of the artists themselves about the production of their paintings, and analysis and interpretation of what they have said leads to the conclusion that painting processes may involve saturated givens both as inciters and as stimulators along the way. However, there are a number of possible interactions between givenness and intentionality, as indicated by the development of a ten-part typology of painting trajectories. This, together with identification of numerous factors which may intervene between originary givenness and finished paintings, provides new evidence supporting existing critiques that Marion has an absolutist tendency in promoting his concepts. Whilst some painting experiences do support Marion's 'crashing on a screen' model of the reception of saturated phenomena, other experiences support the middle ground suggested by Gschwandtner and Mackinlay with respect to degrees of saturated givenness and the hermeneutical role of the recipients of givenness, respectively. The identification of nature as a saturated phenomenon from the evidence of painting processes is also new evidence supporting an existing critique of Marion.

Consideration of painting processes took Marion's work further in the following ways. First, saturated phenomena were discerned as nested, that is manifesting at different scales from the cosmic to the microscopic. In the face of enormous overwhelming phenomena in which God seems to be distant or absent, this allows revelation of immanence through the experience of nested phenomena such as trees in a landscape or individual persons in war. Second, the painting of biblical images was seen as springing both from the Bible as saturated phenomenon and from saturated 'visual-verbal chronotopes', hermeneutical chains of transmission within

which the Bible is embedded. Third, saturated phenomena are not necessarily experienced as good, and it was necessary to try and interpret terrible givens as exemplified in art from the First World War. A possible understanding is that such phenomena are manifestations of the sublime in technological, military, destructive and apocalyptic forms, and from a theological point of view it is suggested that the origins of their givenness may be interpreted in terms of Wink's fallen powers. In terms of painting processes some war artists were identified as fulfilling prophetic roles analogous to the revelatory role of biblical prophets. Fourth, the use of community and collaborative painting processes extended the exploration of dialogical phenomenology which had been initiated by considering portrait painting. Dialogical processes may be interpreted in terms of givenness from Buber's saturated *I-Thou* relationships, and the relationality of the *imago Trinitatis*. Fifth, painting processes may be saturated phenomena in their own right for various reasons including bringing into visibility phenomena which were previously invisible, hidden or ignored; taking artists by surprise with the mystery of appearance; and engendering new trains of thought. These properties are consistent with what Williams says about revelation being 'generative' and initiating 'new possibilities', as quoted above (Williams 2000, p.134).

Saturated phenomena including the originary givenness which forms and sustains the universe including us, may be understood phenomenologically as coming from beyond the far horizon, the horizon of the inherently unknowable. Theologically, according to Marion, that is the horizon of God's giving, for 'God gives Himself to be known insofar as He gives Himself - according to the horizon of the gift itself' (Marion 2012, p. xxvi). It follows that the same phenomenon may be experienced as revelatory in a general or secular sense, or in a religious sense of revealing something of God's presence, or both. In other words, there is a hermeneutical dimension to experiences of revelation, and anthropologically this is located in the faculty of imagination where the received givenness may be patterned or re-patterned. Theology may be understood as a tool available for the imagination to use in its interpreting and patterning of experience. It was

realised that Marion's 'givenness through saturated phenomena' approach is complementary to the 'imagination' approach to revelation pursued by several British and North American theologians. The two approaches need each other, for givenness needs to be received into the faculty of imagination and imagination needs givenness to work on. However, givenness is primary because imagination and faith are both givens in themselves, through flesh as Marion would understand it, in other words through the intricacies of brain structure and functioning.

It has been demonstrated that various degrees of givenness including all of Marion's types of saturated phenomena may be experienced and imaginatively worked on through painting processes. These processes may therefore be revelatory in the sense that revelation results from generative interactions between givenness and imagination, however interpretation is not necessarily theistic. The actuality of theistic Revelation in Marion's terms is a possibility depending on the hermeneutical viewpoint of the artist, springing from imagination informed by theology working on saturated givenness with faith. From a phenomenological point of view painters' responses to givenness and the working of imagination are common to both secular and theistic interpretations of revelation, hence it is concluded that through this commonality painting processes can contribute to addressing tensions between natural and revealed theology.

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